

# *Art & Eros Magazine*



Theme: Emotion and Ideas

Volume Four: Spring 2021

## **Art & Eros Magazine: Volume Four**

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If you have a submission for the **Art & Eros Magazine** feel free to contact the magazine. The editor can be contacted at

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*Two strangers who happened to be  
At the right place  
At the right time  
A love story  
Now begins ...*

Stephanie Cui

## Prologue

Obelisk Press of Vancouver is proud to publish the spring 2021 edition of *Art & Eros Magazine* which serves to feature the work of aspiring artists. The *Art & Eros Magazine* welcomes submissions on a quarterly basis.

Several Vancouver based artists and writers have contributed to this edition, including Olivia Tasaka and Olivia Harks, as well as poetess Stephanie Cui. Salome has also contributed both art and writing. The Theme for the spring 2021 edition of *Art & Eros Magazine* is Emotions and Ideas.

Please feel free to submit your short stories, prose, poetry and artwork to

pbruskiewich @ gmail.com

There is no fee to submit. There is no writer's fee provided by the journal for those who submit. The publishing rights remain with the writer.

The Theme for the next volume is *Summer Leisure*.

## **New Poems by Contemporary Poets**

## ***Five Poems by Stephanie Cui***

### **Dawn**

Out in the moonlight  
The trees are glowing white.  
They are fully dressed and await the wind's call.

But the wind is a shy girl at four in the morning,  
And she does not come out to play.  
Dawn slowly tip-toes, blueing the sky.  
I am lost on a path so familiar.

Does darkness lock up my eyelids  
With a key that only belongs to dawn?  
I sneak by buildings,  
They seem unrealistic against the early light.  
Windows lit here and there, like the fading stars.

My footsteps are shaky,  
My voice –the only echo remaining in the world.  
The sun rows the moon across the sky, claiming its throne.  
And I step into the day drunk with awe.

### **Two Strangers**



~ a palindrome poem

Two strangers  
Returning to  
Their respective homes  
Both leaving for  
The train that departs at dawn  
Boarding amidst the morning fog  
To another ordinary day  
Through the long and weary journey  
Both remain silent  
Rather than talking to each other  
They put on music in their earbuds  
Until the twentieth day  
After smiles and formal greetings  
They resolve to small talks  
Something is starting to change  
They discover their similarities and many differences  
Revealing their strengths and weaknesses  
Wary of the future and afraid of moving forward  
Suffocated by the fear of being alone  
Day after day  
They sit next to each other  
Dozing off on each others' shoulders  
On the late-night train  
Sharing sorrow and joy

And they whisper secrets  
They pour their souls out  
And they learn to trust  
Placing each other above themselves  
Grateful that they are  
Boarding the same train  
Two strangers who happened to be  
At the right place  
At the right time  
A love story  
Now begins ...

### **Spaceship**

The sun peeks through the branches  
as I walk down the shallow steps of the forest trail.  
I hide my sandals in the tree trunk's shadow,  
going barefoot, my skin burns against the golden sand.

I trace around the ruins of the castles  
like the last soldier on guard in her homeland.  
My eyes sparkle when I see the ocean at its full length.

The sky is a cloudy lens  
between the ocean and the universe.  
I think of the routine of waves, their silver edges,

of starfish on the rocks by the shore,  
and of meteors' tails catching fire.  
I connect the dots of stars to form an island.

A ship slowly dissolves into the light,  
and emerges out of the planet Earth.  
I count for the spaceship to take off.

### **Pieces of Time**

I opened my silver pocket watch, it ticks like  
A girl's high-heels down a school hallway.

The watch is a delicate piece of art, inside and out:  
A tiny train on its face brings me back to a moment  
In my dream.

I dream that I'm at a train station,  
Hidden in the crowd,  
I am alone.

I recognize no one, they pass by so fast,  
They hardly notice me.

The sky's at its most beautiful stage,  
When it will

But not yet darken.

I climb to the highest point of the world,  
And people become raindrops  
Dissolve into the moving waves below.

I wave frantically, I yell,  
My hands are too shaky to grab their attention.  
I wish for someone to comfort me.

But no,  
People are catching trains to their dreams,  
Caught up on journeys to Wonderland.

Time crawls down and kisses my palms lightly,  
There I realize her lips have gone still.

### **I am running in a field with open arms**

I am running in a field on my bare feet  
The paddies all bend their heads  
still green and raw  
Autumn is months apart  
I cannot wait for the golden waves to roar  
and I don't want to fall  
(unless you're there to catch me)

I am running in a field with my flowing hair  
was it the wind or  
is my head under water?  
From each curl there dangles a star  
Jewels I picked out just for my feathers  
A beautiful creature like Medusa  
(I will dazzle you with my glare)

I am running in a field with open arms  
The sun went down for me long ago  
In my last letter I confessed to her  
how I dream of  
Sunset forever  
she granted me this wish because  
(I turned myself into a shooting star)

I am running in a field beneath the purple sky  
your reflection in my eyes  
waltzing with the flowers  
I think I'm running towards thin air  
Is this how to disappear?  
A piece of the world will fit into my arms  
(and bestill the rumbling of my heart)

## ***Two poems by Elle***

### **The Obscene Word**

Don't say it!  
You mustn't say it.  
Never use the word.  
It should be struck  
... from the language.  
It should be never,  
... ever heard.  
I can't listen.  
I can't bear to hear.  
You mustn't tell it in anger,  
Or whisper it in my ear.  
Oh, please, please, promise me  
You'll never say ... Goodbye.

### **My Darling ...**

Let me seduce you  
with my wit ...  
my lips ...  
and my fingertips.

***Dear Los Angeles by Briana Lyon***

I miss your flavors  
shouts in the night  
Hot grease splashing  
onto cracked sidewalk

Palm trees, cars, bright colors  
hot little worlds  
Hot blissful heat  
frustration colliding everywhere

the latin jumble  
the zen swath  
the humble rancher

banyan tree  
before a gothic revival facade  
best noodle house  
beside a truck stop titty bar

I want your vivacity  
your chaos and pollution  
breathing again in my lungs

***What I Miss Most of All ... by Aki Kurosawa***

You ask me, what I miss, most of all ...

It is to travel by train,

to far, far away ...

from where I live, in unhappy Tokyo,

and soak in an onsen, even with strangers,

far, far away ...

in the mountains somewhere,

where people know,

you are not from around here,

and point at you, and talk about you

without turning their backs.

I am so lonely that

I might even let a farm boy,

take me into the fields,

far, far away ...

and roll me in the hay

under the cold dark night sky

just to say to my friends

I still remember how to play.

You ask me ... what I miss most of all ...

It is how to be happy.



## **New Works**

## **The Warehouse Party by Gary McCrae**

[A reminiscence recounted by Gary McCrae]

[**San Francisco**] The 1960's is fondly remembered but many people who are now in their 80's. For the rest of you, well, you just have to read the stories and perhaps smile. Not everything from the 1960's was memorable mind you – the loss of two Kennedys and a King, the Viet Nam War, the Hong Kong Flu – but the decade was about youthfulness and about fun. It would be about racing to the Moon and beating the Ruskies. It was the time of the baby-boomers, of which I was one, a boy from Victoria who had meandered down to California to live the Cali lifestyle. And what a life-style!

The 1950's had been staid and proper. That long ten years was all about Ike, and the bomb and flashy cars and a boring, albeit pleasant, home life. But such pleasantries were not for everyone. There were the adventurous types, boys and girls (mostly boys until the pill came along).

You might wonder why the Cali life was so full of hippies and deadheads. It may have simply been that in the States you had three coasts, the East, the Gulf and the West ... the East was too prim and proper, the Gulf too rugged and still the frontier... on Cali anything could go and no one would really care. Oh, and the weather, let me tell you about the weather here in Cali ... it never snowed and only seemed to rain when the rain was expected. And it rarely rained on anyone's parade.

On the East Coast you had New York, Greenwich Village, Andy Warhol and the Factory ... and a different Martini for every day in the month. On the Gulf you had New Orleans and Mardi Gras ... which might have started on a Thursday but would continue for as long as the bourbon and bathtub hooch held out. On the West Coast ... well it was perhaps one big party of you knew the right people. Lucky for me I did.

Who were the right people? It depended who you were and what you wanted in life. Being an artist, I wanted to hang about with other creative people. In San Francisco you didn't have to look very far to find them. Or perhaps they found you. I was a graduate of the *Rudolph Schaeffer School of Art and Design*. Somehow I had acquired a reputation for my creativity, most fabric work in the Notam style.

At the time I lived in a four story walk up in the Mission District and had a neighbor who took a liking to me. She always seemed to be prowling about when I left for work or came home late at night. I don't know how she did it ... perhaps she asked the right people the right questions ... but she knew an awful lot about me. But the situation was not mutual. I didn't really know much about her. It is not that she grew on me ... she sort of glommed on me. She wanted me to take her out ... and 'show her the sights.'

This was odd for me for I was the 'out-of-towner' and she had grown up in Cali. I think she was lonely, because she started to call me 'her man.' She said this to the postman who delivered our mail; To the grocery at the corner

store; The druggist at the end of the block ... and then to me (I was the last to be told the news). She wanted to be taken out.

Oh boy ... complications. But they were of the pleasant kind. She was a petite girl a few years younger than me. A bouncy brunette, well read, at least of the popular genre. She was well turned out in her simple fashions. She had few pretenses, except, of course towards me. Having a soft heart I let her play out that charade.

‘Will you take me out?’ Her eyes were luscious pools of emotion. If she were a kitten she could sit on my lap with those eyes.

A kitten has a way with people. It is not an imposing way, just a persistence that can’t be faulted. She purred and purred and purred, until I could not say no to her.

To stop her purring I relented. “Ok ... where do you want to go and what do you want to do?”

“This Saturday ... let’s do something together this Saturday evening.” She seemed most insistent. I could have said no ... I should have said no ... but I didn’t.

Well one of the few carry-overs from my ‘50’s up-bringing was my Saturday night was bath night; a warm bath, a good book and perhaps Sinatra on the radio. Yes ... I know ... how quaint, but the rest of my week

is so busy that I don't have much time to wash between my toes, behind my ears nor even scrub my back.

But she was most unrelenting. "Saturday night ..." like Chinese water torture ... drip ... drip ... drip ... "Saturday night ..."

All during the week I asked "and what about Saturday night?"

And all during the week she answered enigmatically "you'll see!"

By Friday she had me around her little finger. I caught her, for once, arriving home with her arms full of two grocery bags, and being a gallant dandy I took them off her arms and she invited me into her apartment, two floor down from mine, for a glass of wine. I sat at her kitchen table as she set out her groceries. What is the difference between 'putting away' and 'setting out?' you may ask. She had bought things for a get together – wine, crackers, hors d'oeuvres and cheese.

I asked her whether this 'lay-out' was for Saturday Night. She just smiled enigmatically. 'Just wear something nice,' she replied.

Yes ... needless complications. I wondered if I should step in front of a tram and break my leg ...

Though I was worried I managed to get a good sleep that night since I knew I was going to need it ... Saturday Night ... what had she planned for our Saturday Night?

The following afternoon, around 4 she ordered us a taxi and when it arrived around 6 she handed the driver a small piece of paper. As we settled into the back seat she turned to me, smiled and said “trust me ...” I had seen her smile often before, but this smile had an edge to it.

Have you ever been told by a friend ...”trust me.” And, what resulted from this? Something good I hope. As I recount what our Saturday Night would become I leave it to you to decide what it became ... if you get my meaning,

It was a surprise as we left the fashionable parts of ‘Frisco behind us and made our way to the seedy warehouse district. Most of the buildings were old and abandoned, except one, the one we pulled up to. The taxi man gave us a wondering look ‘ you’re the third fare I have dropped off here this evening ...’

We got out and started to the door. There were two bouncers but they were unexpected. Instead of being two mighty gorillas. They were two fashionably dressed women, one with a phone in her hand. I guess someone at the other end of the phone would give the nod.

My friend smiled and one of the women replied in kind. The other one spoke a word or two into the phone. There was a pause then a nod and then we were in.

The ground floor of the warehouse was empty, dark, dusty and grey. The only colour and light was near the freight elevator at the back. As we walked across the floor, my friend's high heel shoes produced a clickety-clack sound that just made the room seem twice as hollow and four times as ominous. What had I gotten myself into, I thought during the long and *horrorisant* trod to the elevator.

Again, two very fashionably dressed women at the elevator, one to usher us into the lift, and close the heavy metal door behind us, and the other to operate the heavy metal lift mechanism. The lift operator was as tiny as a mouse. I could see she took all her strength to operate the lever mechanism, but by the smile on her face I knew she was enjoying the whole power trip.

It was a slow ascent to the top floor. And with each passage of a floor the sound of a get together got louder and louder. The sound was hard to describe. It was a mix between a rumble and a rabble. The rumble came from jazz being played live and the rabble came from the myriad of the voices of the party goers.

My friend had set our sights on the most unique party of that '60's season. I had heard rumors that some gathering was going to happen ... they called them happenings, as if they were spontaneous ... but the rumors were just

wisps and whispers, here and there among my circle of creatives. Well this was anything but spontaneous.

The bars to the lift could not be lifted fast enough for my friend she peered through the bars like a hungry tigress before her meal. She looked up at me with eyes that sparkled and a smile that could melt an iceberg.

“Aren’t you glad you trusted me?” She dashed into the crowd. I stepped off the lift and looked around the large floor.

The rabble was a mix of fashionables and hippies. I recognized Allen Ginsberg, John Kerouac and Paddy O’Sullivan. Like three vertices of an equilateral triangle they marked their territory among admiring gaggles of partygoers, mostly women fashionably dressed.

My friend rushed back and grabbed my hand and excitedly bellowed “let me introduce you to someone I know.” The lift door slammed shut behind me and I felt like I was about to be thrown to the tigers. I am not one for parties. Let alone large parties, let alone circuses, but I was here and she was here and well she was pretty strong for her slight height and weight. She dragged me along, through the rabble, parting the people like a Moses parting a troubled waters.

It was to Paddy O’Sullivan she dragged me. He looked up at me with big, bushy, bored eyes as he said “glad you could make it,” above the *horrorisant* sound and patted my friend on her backside with his big, bushy bored hands.



She didn't mind the man handling.

The two started into an unfinished conversation they had from a previous encounter and so I soon felt the third man ... I let them prattle on and smiled meekly from time to time, nodding for effect, and as they got further and further into something to do with *avant garde* poetry I drifted over to the jazz band.

They were in a world all their own. Smoke drifted up from the fags they each dragged on. Its sweet aroma always made me ill, but it was what it was, and it was what was giving them the inspiration to *play jazz*.

I felt a pinch on my backside and whirled around to find my friend holding two beer bottles in one hand and playing the crab with the other. She handed me a beer bottle and then clinked hers to mine.

"Thanks ..."

"For what?" I answered.

"For bringing me here ..."

She waved her beer bottle around the room, spilling some beer onto the floor. She used her right foot to spread the beer around.

I waited until she looked back up at me before I said “shouldn’t I be the one thanking you?”

She shrugged her shoulders and drank some of her beer.

To be perfectly honest I am not a beer man but I owed it to her and drank a swig. Wretched stuff beer ... even iced cold ... by the time I had finished the swig she had disappeared. It would be like that for the next hour or so. She would put in her reappearance and then disappear in the blink of an eye. I don’t know if she was doing this for her own reassurance, or whether she was keeping tabs on me. I returned back to the *jazz*.

Off in one corner of the floor behind a blind hanging from the rafters something caught my eye. It was the flash of a small Krieg light. Someone was filming. Being a curious sort I drifted over and walked around the edge of the blind to discover to my great surprise a scene out of a Grosz painting. There was a large billiards table with one man and three women. He was fully clothed while the three women were in their dainties. The three women were playing billiards while the man was watching them. A woman was doing the filming. I was about to duck back to the other side of the blind when one of the women waved me to stay.

So I did. I watched as a game of what could only be called strip billiards was played out by the three women. It sort of turned into this:



This isn't an actual picture from that evening, but it is close enough of a similitude.

Then once again, my friend reappeared. She grabbed my hand and tugged me back to the rabble. "Naughty boy," she said with a feline expression on her face.

This time she introduced me to John Kerouac. Again the two of them spoke like old friends. Again I just sat there listening. This time my friend took note, leaned over and whispered, 'don't you want to talk with him?'

"About what?" I whispered back.

"About his writing ... his book!"

"Haven't read any of his writing ..."

She peered at me with such astonishment that Kerouac asked her “what’s the fuss?”

Embarrassed of me and my ignorance she said “oh ... nothing,” to him.

In an understanding fashion Kerouac replied “It’s ok if he hasn’t read my book. Lot’s of folks haven’t read my book” and looking up at me with stern eyes he continued “and never will...”

“Oh he will” my friend said scornfully “oh he will.” Then she turned he back on me as a rebuke.

Fine by me, and I drifted away as she and he launched into some esoteric psychoanalysis of traveling and dreams.

My throat was dry. I was still holding my beer and took another swig. Wretched stuff!

Across the room I could see Allen Ginsberg leaning up against some abandoned crates in an animate conversation with several women. It was then that I realized that there were perhaps four times as many women here as men. The women were all dressed to the nines, while them men, or at least O’Sullivan, Kerouac and Ginsberg were dressed like longshoremen. I was the odd man out in my silks and cashmere. Did I tell you I am a dandy?

Suddenly there was a ringing of the emergency bell on the lift and it was like someone had dropped a fox in among the chickens.

There was a mad dash to the windows and as we looked down we saw a long string of flashing lights and paddy wagons. It was a police raid.

My friend grabbed my hand and dashed us over to Paddy O'Sullivan who didn't seemed at all perturbed by the news. "They do this to me all the time."

I explained to Paddy that I was a Canadian and if arrested they might deport me. He just nodded sideways with his head and started to walk to a dark and almost invisible corner of the warehouse.

Paddy looked over his shoulder and when he saw no one was watching he pressed a panel in the wall and it swung open revealing a spiral staircase leading down. "This goes to the basement. If you follow the chalk lines on the wall you'll get out fine. How are you fixed touring the sewers?"

On the landing was an old wooden crate with several well-used electric miner's lamps. He grabbed one turned it on to check it worked and handed it to me. "You'll need this."

Before my friend could say anything Paddy pushed us both through and closed the panel behind us. We had only one way we could go, down the rusty old spiral staircase for the wall panel had no latch on the inside.

And so I led the way slowly down the spiral staircase, my friend clinging closely to me. “I am scared ...”

“So am I ...” I said this before I could stop myself. Perhaps I should have said something else to her to reassure her, but you can’t blame me for being honest. I was scared.

The air in the spiral staircase was dank, smoky and musty. The smoke followed us in. We slowly inched our way down the spiral. At each landing there was a white chalk arrow on the red brick wall pointing downwards into the dark depths. Her clickety-clack now seemed comforting to me.

“How much further,” she said tremulously.

“I think we are almost to the bottom,’ and indeed we were. There in front of us appeared out of the darkness a large iron door with an equally large iron bar door latch. I pulled at it and it did not budge. It had been rusted shut.

As hard as I tried it would not budge! I put my weight on the latch and pulled, and nothing. We both put our weights on the latch and together we pushed. As if to tease us it slipped a bit and then the rust holding it fast brought it to a grinding halt. The latch was so well made that there was no clearance between the plates and rust had rendered it tight. If only we had some lubricant.

The light flickered and dimmed appreciably, as if it itself was also losing hope. “Now what?” my friend asked as she pressed herself closer to me. I could feel that she was trembling

Yes now what? I thought to myself. We were trapped ... top and bottom. The chill was starting to creep into my bones. My bladder, began to complain. I thought about the beer that I had drank and was about to curse myself for drinking it when a drastic measure crossed my mind.”

Here,” I said to my friend, “point this at the latch.” Handing her the miner’s lamp. It flickered again.

Then I aimed carefully and pissed atop the latch for a split second and then without tucking myself in I pressed against the latch and moved it a tad. Then I stepped back and took aim a second time. The second push moved the latch another few millimeters. But after three tries I had run dry ... and the latch was unseated.

I tucked myself away. “Can you lift me?” my friend inquired dauntlessly.

“Yes!” I had run dry and now it was her turn. I set the miner’s lamp on the floor.

“Turn around,” she said. Then I did I heard the rustling of her dress. She handed me her panties. “Hold on to these for me.” I tucked them into my pocket.

Then she wrapped her arms around my neck. I knew what she needed me to do. I took one step back and heard her say “ffff ... cold.” I imagined her bare backside pressed against the solid door. She placed her shoes against the door. Then there was a nearly silent whistle for a split second before she climbed off my back.

Together we worked the latch. It moved a bit more. With our faces pressed to the door the smell of pee became noticeable over the dank smoky, musty odour of the stairwell.

“Turn around again,” and we repeated the whole contortion a second time. This time she lubricated the latch for a split second longer. Then we worked it.

Almost there!

She hopped on my back a third time and let things rip until she too was spent. “Third time lucky?” she said with a giggle.

We looked into each other’s face for a split second. It was now or never. Together we pushed and pull as hard as we could ... then the latch clunked and the door swung open. The smells of the stairwell was lost in the funk of



the air that forced its way in from the underground. But we didn't mind ... we were free.

She picked up the miner's lamp, grabbed my hand and lead the way. The miner's lamp died that instant. She left it behind and we stepped through the door.

As we stepped into the dank underground we could see the street light streaming from the drain gratings. A few steps past the door was a ladder that led up to our freedom.

We both let out sighs of relief. "Care for some hors d'oeuvres?" She went first up the ladder and in the dim lighting of the place it was eerie how the shadows cast just above her knees. I guess I should have given her back her panties.

I followed her up the ladder and into the empty street thinking ... if only she knew how much I disliked smoked oysters!

## ***With Arms Outstretched by Gemma Crowe***

Ciliary muscles contract focusing light on the retina

Left transversus abdominis adducts

Right Latissimus dorsi flexes

Right Trapezius flexes

First to fourth right distal and middle phalanx extend

Radius and ulna extend supinated

Right psoas major, Iliacus, rectus femoris and  
sartorius flex

Right subscapularis contracts

Left subscapularis extends

Erector spinae

contracts

*Gesture:* is the language we do not speak.

*Connection:* is the meeting of intention with resolution, physically, or in an understanding passed from one to another. Communication and physicality can be one in the same when it comes to connection.

*Reach:* is the site of an invitation to connect: asking, giving and beckoning from one to another.

Everything that is not uttered straight from our chest is said via the body.

## **The Gesture of Reach**

The most useful parts of our physical being have a way of becoming reduced to a practicality that becomes chronically difficult to dispute. The body manifests more than we can put into words. It is regularly exploited and commodified in ways we aren't even aware of. In extending a hand out, I am speaking our collective first language. That act, when suspended, is ripe with feedback. When I reach out, I feel vulnerable, whether I am offering or asking, the obviousness of the gesture leaves no room for self preservation. Extending the arm, and reaching a hand out exposes us to consequences of pride, but I would also acknowledge the participation of the shoulders and the precarity in the redistribution of weight that opens us up to a physical sense of risk. One can perform this action with varying degrees of commitment, but at the sacrifice of clarity and the ensuing success. The backspace is the unsung hero with the core engaged and major mobilizers at-the-ready to continue forward or to counterbalance. Behind the scenes, it is poised to step in while the shoulder eloquently gesticulates.

Think about what the shoulders carry: anything picked up in the arms, anything slung or packed on the back, most of what we wear - often as a means of visually identifying ourselves - is propped up on our shoulders. Together, the shoulders carry the head, encase the windpipes and vital arteries, and descend down to house the heart and lungs. The shoulder is the representational edge of our heartspace: a shoulder to cry on, or to shoulder the blame. With limited articulation of their own, the shoulders reveal more

subtly with subconscious messages we don't necessarily set out to express. As the point of initiation, the first participating reflexive action, the shoulder authors the invitation for connecting with the world, and that which (for the sake of categorization) is outside of us. The invitation within the gesture must be sustained until it is recognized and accepted, or rejected. The unacknowledged invitation hangs in time and space long outlasting the moment and ever-heightening our awareness of the emotional bid, raising the initial stakes of the gesture. The shoulders, arms, and hands are charged with much of our typical functionality, so much that this area feels essential to connection. With any body composition, ability, or range of motion, however, I would argue there exists a shoulder, as the site of extension. The place that rolls, tenses, and caves in accordingly. The part of us that with limited resources of mobility, reveals immensely. This is the one place in the body that becomes involved when any amount of physical reach is performed.

How often do we use reaching as a gesture? It is the gesture that precludes the act of exchange; we don't shove something into someone's chest, unless we're doing it in a decidedly un-giving way, nor do we snatch something that is being offered in our direction. We extend in a performative fashion, more expositional than necessary. It starts fast so as to catch the eye, then slows down, giving the receiver time to meet the gesture, either taking something or giving it back. The gesture is the functional component more so than the actual action. While it is almost identical in intention, there is an intermediary, which reroutes the entire action through the engagement of the other, and their subsequent enablement. What is demonstrated here is a

desire, then acknowledgement and connection, specifically between people. What is distilled in this process? The ask. Asking to have or asking to give, we're aching to connect via point-of-contact perceived, theoretical, or concrete.

The opening of the hand, submissive and supine, is essential in the reach as the grasp is the intended outcome we're representing. Without the open, receptive palm, the gesture becomes indicative. We see this in pointing, or directing with the angle of the arm, in which case; the objective is to guide the gaze, to direct or move the attention, usually away.

The hand is important, but it is not everything. The fact that we can hold our hands out in front of us to analyse them separate from the rest of the body, the concept of self, makes them somewhat removed from our inherent being, but the shoulder is undeniably in collaboration with our head and our face - it is part of the whole picture, an assemblage of the self, and what others recognise as us.

## **The Direction of Desire**

The physical and figurative connotation of reaching out is an extension towards that which is out of our immediate grasp. When we extend ourselves, we indicate our desire. Our needs can be self-explanatory, and our wants, arbitrary, but that which we desire has more of a specificity of time and direction. In the word desire, there is an urgency suggested. Desire tends to be future-oriented as we cannot desire something in the past. I would even

ascribe a proximity to desire; in front of us spatially, ahead of us as positioned in time, but close enough that with any amount of reach, could hypothetically be attained.

Desire is predicated by lack. Franco Berardi quotes Jean Baudrillard in *Desire, Pleasure, Senility, and Evolution*, in saying that “the entire history of capitalism is based on permanent desire.” Implicit in this statement is a constant sensation of lack, fueled by growing conviction for what we supposedly “need,” creating perpetual desire. How do we attain our desire? Capitalism positions us to obtain only the material consequences of our desires, which is temporarily diminished by the products and services gained by means of our own. Here is the real clincher, our sense of desire is stoked 24/7 but we’re not meant to believe we can get it from each other, or for free. We are meant to spend money on things to tide us over, all on our own. Berardi further states “capitalism is, in fact, based on an endless postponement of pleasure, and simultaneously on the permanent excitement of desire. Virtual capitalism—what I call semiocapitalism—is an intensification of both these conditions, postponing pleasure and exciting desire.” If we’re expected to meet our own needs, the reach can not only feel vulnerable but also a little guilty, like an admission of our limited capacities, or shortcomings.

It’s like the proverbial carrot dangling in front of our face to get us to perpetually proceed. Desire is the act of directed intention. The reach is not about obtaining something, that would be a grasp, the reach is the gesture, an

offer in itself. Acknowledged, and in some cases leaving that space between up for debate.

## **Disconnected and Overstretched**

Ultimately, removed from any other prescribed function, there is an undeniable nature of the arms in space. To “wave ones arms madly,” is a loaded expression. We understand the “madness” to be pointlessness, an irrational use of such purposeful appendages. It is the consequence of excessive use of energy and space (and our attention) for no reasonable gain. What are you doing with your arms if they aren’t functional? When we make these parts of our body out to be crucial, their use can be criticized. How often do we need something to do with our hands to feel at ease?

Extending any part of ourselves can feel uncomfortable. We say we are “sticking our neck out” when we draw unnecessary attention to ourselves. One can presume this is a reference to the guillotine. A true matter of life and death! Extending beyond our respectable perimeter is about occupying more space than we assume, or have ben explicitly told, we deserve. It’s taking up space and it’s directing attention our way. It’s reclaiming real estate and asserting our existence, while illustrating our sense of worth.

Kim Turcot DiFruscia, discusses corporeality in *Shapes of Freedom: A Conversation with Elizabeth A. Povinelli* and asks “How is the body and its illnesses being shaped by multiple, often incommensurate discourses? How

are these discourses of inclusion and exclusion always already shaping and differentiating bodies, socialities, and social obligations—mine and those of my indigenous colleagues?” DiFruscia refers to a sore she has developed and highlights the divide between social concept and physical ailment as a matter of discursive discourse. Whether what ails us is deemed material or metaphoric, the impact it has on weakening the self is what matters. DiFruscia lays it out like this “‘Corporeality’ would be the way in which dominant forms of power shape and reshape materiality, how discourses produce categories and divisions between categories—human, nonhuman, person, nonperson, body, sex, and so forth—” Social issues, at the very heart, remove our agency to determine our needs and desires as immaterial.

The feedback we receive when reaching brings attention to our capabilities and what’s at stake as we are keenly aware of the space between ourselves and what we desire. Further, privilege makes for some, a need and others, a desire. This renders some concepts farther out of reach for some as they must extend themselves even farther. The subjectivity of deserving makes access a reward for those holding out, outstretched, the longest. Why then is reaching seen as an invitation or even an aspiration, while the “hand-out” is a pejorative term. Perhaps that’s the power we get to assume when we take pity, it’s all connection without any of the risk.

### **Alienation: making contact**

Think about the lengths that we go to *not* to ask for things so as to not extend ourselves. We tend to want everything to be within arms reach, at our



fingertips. In the analysis in *Fedorov's Geographies of Time*, Trevor Paglen highlights Federov's contestation that "the most pressing thing that humans need to do is restore a sense of 'kinship.'" Going on to say that "the biggest problem is that we live in a state of alienation. Alienation from each other, from nature, and from time itself." What alienates us more than not sharing? What else is lost along with the proximity of exchange and the increased attenuation of human connection?

The discomfort of reaching can also point to a fear of meaningful connection, what's more meaningful than helping another? Brian Wood, in *Is it love?* offers that "solidarities between people within the sphere of capital are capable of compensating for the inequities produced by capital." People talk about the need to be seen, as in being understood or for their individualities to be recognized. I offer, the gratitude we feel for being met in the reach, in the moment of asking, is a mutual affirmation between two people. I believe there's a reason we continue to seek more and more once we've obtained what we desire, because we've lost that moment of connection. With the force of capitalism aside, I think there's a very real reason we are ready to accept a transactional existence; because it makes sense to us in the cause-and-effect type of truth that we're used to seeing as proof and it's simple to justify. A lot of capitalism is the marketing of desire. While it is prudent and pragmatic to be self-reliant, it is also a little lonely. Gift economies create relationships for continued mutual exchange. In these settings payment is meaningful acknowledgement, which can be in the form of another gift until asking becomes a welcome opportunity for reciprocation. Asking is also having the grace to recognize the significance

of generosity as connection, and the understanding that we too have something to offer.

As Federov puts it “the problem with the notion of progress, and history more generally, is that it produces alienation—alienation from one generation to the next, and from the present to the past.” Our desires focus on the time between ourselves and what we want, as a mere inconvenience, a challenge or something to rectify. This dismisses the beauty of the ask in the offer and the extension. To skip the discomfort would be to miss the moment of connection. Progress asks us to go ahead and snatch what we want because that is of sole importance, the acquiring and the ownership, leaving behind any notion of the value of the other, who has something to offer that we cannot produce ourselves. I would argue that it’s endemic of the culture of individualism that causes us to fear asking, and pride ourselves on our own capability.

Reaching out, of any kind, will always require some sort of concession when seeking connection. We create tactics to dull the sensation of vulnerability and to remove the pressure of the act but we cannot completely bypass this feeling and we cannot self sustain indefinitely. This unease lives in our bodies even if we don’t understand it’s origin. As we retract we are caving in on ourselves, hoarding resources vital to one another that we will ultimately regret not sharing. The gift is in the connection made by asking, extending and reaching out. To move through this action is to recognize our limits and to ascertain reciprocal abundance.

In my practice of observation, I embody and unearth the roots of unconscious manifestations to see them in a new light, in a new way.

The most vulnerable action is to reach. out.  
My shoulders carry everything but possess no real control.  
When I reach for something, I am risking life and limb.  
I am extending myself.  
I might not grasp it. I could be rejected.  
I am ultimately extending myself in hopes of connection.  
I am reaching out to you.

## ***Silence. Beautiful Silence by Olivia Harks***

“I hear dogs barking outside, their regular evening catch up. My daughter wriggles around beside getting comfy to go to sleep.

All of a sudden, the blankets beneath me give out and I fall straight through them.

I fall for some time, and when I land it is on a soft pile of moss at the base of a giant tree. There are trees all around. I can hear the calls of birds now, chit chatting all round the leaves above me. I stand up and brush off a little. Instead of hearing occasional cars, now I hear a rushing river sound.

I walk toward the noise and push some branches out of the way, there is a giant black panther sitting on the riverbank in front of me. She looks over and in a sleepy voice says, writing about me? I say, trying to.

She looks away back down the river. I look to see what she is looking at - some butterflies flying above the surface of the running water - suddenly a large fish leaps out of the water and snaps one clean out of the air. That’s what she was watching.

What was beneath the surface. She stands up and walks over to me and bumps her head into mine. Then we sit.

Silence. Beautiful silence.

A giant rumble starts to echo through the jungle / my daughter is fast asleep and snoring.

Back in the black room, I slide out slowly onto the floor, wait a moment, and silently step over the creaky floor board past some butterflies on the way out.

## ***Cinnamon and Orange by Allison Quiller***

Jill's eyes kept drifting back to the address scribbled on the sticky note on her dashboard. "202 Paintbrush Avenue." The name echoed in her head as she drove down the cracked residential street. The oak trees were ripe with autumn color, the reds and oranges vibrant in the misty day.

Two-oh-two Paintbrush Avenue, 202 Paintbrush Avenue.

The day before, Dr. Moore had handed back the term papers from Jill's Advanced Psychology class. "Protest, Despair, and Detachment: A Study of Grief by Jill Newmeyer." There was no grade, only the note and the address.

There. A two story maroon Victorian with a full garden and widow's walk.

Jill pulled into the driveway and checked herself in the mirror. Mousy. That's the only way she had ever been described, but whether it was because of her looks or because of the pinched and nervous expression around her mouth, she never knew.

She summoned up her courage, gathered her things and walked down the flagstones to the front porch. Red vines curled around the railings and several empty birdcages rocked in the breeze above the porch. The garden was rich, colorful, blooming. Jill glanced up at the tall house. Upstairs, a curtain swung shut.

What could Dr. Moore want with her? She wasn't the best in her class, but she wasn't the worst, either. Her work was always tidy and on time. She never complained or interrupted class. Jill kept to herself.

Her heels clicked, hollow as she ascended the steps. She stopped before the peeling front door, straightened her skirt and her glasses. Before she could reach for the bell, the door opened.

Dr. Moore's eyes behind her small round glasses were the first thing Jill could see. Then came her wide smile as she stepped out of the doorway. Her clothes billowed, and her grey hair spiraled past her shoulders. Several scarves hung around her neck in a spectrum of color.

Jill contorted her lips into an unfamiliar smile. As Dr. Moore shut the door behind her, a slight, sweet smell swept onto the porch. It reminded Jill of the holidays.

"Jill Newmeyer. My dear." The doctor beamed. Her teeth were very white, almost a transparent blue.

"Dr. Moore."

"We aren't in the classroom. Please, call me Ellora."

"Ellora."

“I have tea for us, but the water is still boiling. Let us sit outside for a bit. It's an appropriate day for that sort of thing, don't you think?”

“Oh, sure. That's fine.” Ellora ushered Jill over to the porch swing and sat in an eddy of flowing material. Jill lowered herself beside her.

The doctor sighed. “I am completely enamored with days like this. There is something romantic about it.”

“I suppose.”

There was a brief silence then. Ellora's eyes closed as she breathed in the cool air while Jill sat straight, her fingers toying in her lap.

“Um...” Jill ventured. Ellora's eyes opened. “I brought the copy of my term paper.” Jill started to rummage in her bag before Ellora's rich laugh cut her off.

“I'm sorry,” Jill stammered.

“Your paper is impeccable, dear. You approached the subject with a certain freshness that I haven't seen in years. But that's not why I asked you here.”

“Excuse me?”



Ellora stood and walked over to the railing. "I'm afraid I let my garden go this summer."

Jill looked more closely at the garden. Weeds grew through the blooms, and the flowers bent their heads towards the soil. A mouse lay stiff beneath a rosebush.

"I must have been confused," said Jill, "I thought you wanted..." She trailed off. She didn't know what she thought Dr. Moore had wanted.

"My dahlias are wilting." Ellora turned back to Jill. "I took a liking to you well before your term paper." She shook her head. "I'm a bit embarrassed why I brought you over. I would like you to meet my son."

The sound of a whistle pierced the air, making Jill jump. "That will be the tea," Ellora said. Jill looked again at the mouse beneath the rosebush. A few feet away there was another, on its back. And by the dahlias, there were two, facing each other, their tails curled around their noses.

"Are you coming, dear?" Ellora asked.

"Yes."

Ten minutes later, Jill sat in Dr. Moore's cramped library, her hands cupped around a mug of tea. The room was warm and windowless. Dr. Moore had a photo album open to pictures of her son, Silus. He was dark and thin, and

even as a child there were few photos of him smiling. He was handsome, though, so Jill continued to humour Dr. Moore.

“Who's that?” Jill said, pointing to a tall man standing beside the sad-eyed boy.

“My late husband,” Dr. Moore said, and her eyes lingered on the photo a moment before she flipped to the next page. “I hope you like your tea. Cinnamon and Orange, Silus's favorite.”

Jill smiled weakly and nodded. Inside the house, the sweet smell that had reminded her of the holidays was thick and oppressive. Underneath it there was something else.

“Where is Silus now?” she asked.

“Just upstairs, dear. You'll meet him in a moment.”

“He's here?”

Ellora nodded and flipped to the next page of the photo album. “You'll meet him in a moment.”

Jill stood up and shook her head. She wished there were windows, or at least a picture. Books pressed down on her from all sides.

Dr. Moore took her glasses off and smiled. “You could have written your term paper about anything at all.”

“I think I need some fresh air,” Jill said.

“What made you choose grief?”

Jill sat again. Maybe if she sipped her tea. “It's... it's fascinating.”

“You're more than fascinated. You're familiar.”

“I lost my parents early on.”

“After my husband, I wasn't ready to let go of Silus. I didn't want to be alone.”

“I understand,” Jill said, although she did not. She put a hand to her forehead. “I should probably get going.”

“Don't be silly. Come upstairs and meet my boy.”

“If it's only for a moment.”

Ellora put a hand on Jill's elbow and guided her from her chair.

They came to a narrow stairway. Stiff, dark oil paintings covered the walls, shoved together in irregular patterns. Jill had to squint to see, and kept her hand on the wall to steady herself. The sweet smell was stronger now, and the odor underneath became more foul with each step.

Ellora opened the door at the top of the stairwell and motioned Jill inside. As Jill's eyes adjusted to the light, she suddenly placed the odor. The bloated body on the bed stared at her, disinterested.

It was dressed in a suit, it's arms lolling open as if to accept an embrace. Cinnamon sticks and dried orange peels littered the body and the bed like autumn leaves.

“Companionship is the key to happiness. You two will be spending much time together in the future.” She looked at Jill, still smiling. “How was that tea, dear?” Jill's fingertips began to tingle, and she heard her cup shatter on the floor. She backed toward the door, but she was already feeling light-headed.

Dr. Ellora Moore padded over to the bed, and stroked the body's hair. She looked lovingly into it's eyes, “This is the girl I was telling you about, Silus. Would you like some more tea?”

{First published in *This Great Society* in Sept. 2011}

## ***How Self-Healing Can Save the World by Salome Cai***

First, let me say thank you to who chose this significant question – “What does it mean to be young in an aging world?” – a great secret of the well-being of both humans and the world we live in is hidden within this question.

Why am I interested in this topic?

I know someone like me is born to experience a colorful life, and explore this world of manifestations.

To begin, perhaps I should tell you that English is my third language after Mandarin and French. I will write from my heart in English and hope you can understand the depth of what I am trying to say.

Looking back in my life, in China, Europe, and North America, I have studied to be an interior designer and culinary artist, working as a model wearing fancy clothes, in the furniture and home supply business, as a freelance journalist and writer exploring and writing about culture and art, as a Chef in high-end restaurants, as a manager in a fast food chain of restaurants, as a sales person in Real Estate, as an entrepreneur in International trade business, as a mother of a five year old boy ( and someone who is expecting a second baby, a daughter, in February) an unhappy self-lost wife in a normal and serious marriage, now ended ... all

this ... then I started to wonder, was I just living to grow old in an aging world?

But why am I living here at this very moment as a human being? I have chosen to be a single mother with a son for the past three years. I will never regret the suffering from the heartbreaking experience of separation and divorce. Of the extreme loneliness with no one's help except of one or two close friends. I will never forget the social judgment and endless challenges, since, this is what made me an awakened being, a person with real heart and spirit. This journey is how I have found the way to discover my inner self through consciousness.

I have learned much more in these past three years than my whole life before then. In order to understand why what has happened to me seems so infortune (I was always trying hard to be nice and kind), I have started reading all subjects of books, studies, and research, knowledge for anything I wanted to know about. I have also studied in universities, workshops and seminars so I could to learn more about myself, humanity, and this world. Maybe because of my interesting life – which had made me try all kinds of different studies, work and activities in my early age – I was able to gather in all sorts of different information, knowledge and the science of them, my skills of multi-language such as Mandarin, English, and French enable me to have access into varied views of the world. I have sought to find both the similarities and differences during my studies of cultures from around the world. I feel some connect to each culture. I grew up in the PRC, have

spent time in Paris France and now live in the cosmopolitan city of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

I have also understood how important to love myself, care about myself, particularly not through the eyes of others. I exercise to keep myself in a good shape and pretty, but realized the exercises are not only for external, but as well as for internal wellbeing which in many ways is more essential for life.; I started to do more and more yoga, Qigong, meditation and many other types of internal self healing exercises every day. I have followed so many mentors and teachers from ancient time to modern life.

Through my studies, I have been inspired by several Chinese ancient philosopher such as LaoZi, Mengzi, Quotes of Buddha in Easter India, Cabir and Al-Hillaj Mansoor from the Middle East, as well as ancient Greek and Babylonian wisdom. And from the western world, Jesus. As well as the well know scientists artists: Charles Darwin, Albert Einstein, and Leonardo Da Vinci. I am working on finding and learning from the most original documents during my studies to avoid the false beliefs in this modern world which was confusing me and made me suffer from chaotic thought and random patterns.

I have understood the laws of the universe would never change in life such as ‘All outside is from within’; ‘suffering and enjoyment, or pain and pleasure exist relatively.’..... I have accepted and mastered these laws through my self-healing practice. I am actually lucky to know all these when I am still young in mind, body and soul. I stopped complaining, criticizing

and judging outside world and myself, slowly I took myself out of the Victim state of my life. I was since more interested in this world, and the human being, a single mum working on her way to her beautiful dream. Then I became a meditation teacher, and a writer for self-healing.

Through my study of Quantum Physics, I have learned certain universal laws, such as the '*Law of Attraction*' – an existential notion that you attract what you think about. It can explain why this world is aging, damaged, polluted, and sees more and more troubles and conflicts. We decide to cause harm and so lots of species of plants and animals are in danger, natural resources are exhausting, and we human seems less and less healthy.

This question, *what does it mean to be young in an aging world*, it is not just a question, it indicates a wise suggestion for the well being of human and the world; We need to maintain a state of youth, and a healthy self-being to live in this world that seems getting old and unhealthy.

### **Truth of This Aging World**

In our society, we are becoming content with fighting against things: against cancer, against poverty, against drugs, against terrorism, fighting against violence, fighting against a lack of resources – We tend to fight against anything we do not want.

There is a 'Law of attraction': is "*Anything we focus on we do create, what resist will persist.*"



For example, if we are angry about a war that is going on, since emotion is the most powerful energy, we are adding huge amount of our energy into it, we are pushing ourselves, and all that will only create resistance, and we will see more and more wars and conflicts in the world.

What Quantum Physics tell us is that everything is driven by the ebb and flow of energy. We use our energy to create thoughts, thereby, resisting certain things means putting more and more energy in those thoughts. It is like trying to change outside pictures after they have been transmitted.

We can see from the words of the most remarkable legend of science and creativity Albert Einstein: “Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited; imagination is what circles the world.” So why are not we imagining and creating a world of happiness and manifestation?

There are ancient philosophies also emphasize on law everything outside is from within.

What we want is based on our inner image, Christian philosophy tells us: “Ask and you will receive.” We ask based on what we have imagine in our mind, and it is going to manifest. Good or bad.

Or from Roman history- *Votum est mandatum meum* (your wish is my command).

“As above, so below, as within, so without, as the universe, so the soul...”  
Hermes Trismegistus. These are some principles taught by Hermes Trismegistus, also known as Hermes, the Greek God of travelers/thieves/commerce and the messenger of the Gods. He was also known as the great priest Thoth to the Egyptians. “...it is understood that these ideas were passed from Master to Initiate for generations, for the purpose of personal growth and with the intention of achieving a greater and deeper understanding of the self, the world and beyond. For the student of religion, philosophy and science, the Hermetic teachings act as the key to tying all of the different schools of thought into one cohesive body of knowledge.”

Thus, what the world is demonstrating to us is that, it is getting old and not pleasant, but, if we are focusing on anger and feeling sorrow about ourselves and the world, the world will just get older and less and less pleasant.

### **Being young**

In my study of human wholeness and healing, I have learned that, ‘aging’ for us is just a physical biological function of our body. The word ‘aging’ is actually a restrained word for our health, wellbeing and happiness.

Also regarding to the ‘Law of Attraction’, we define our age, our limiting thoughts of age made us getting old and sick.

But our brain patterns cannot change like erasing a blackboard and then writing something new, our thinking patterns, models came from years and years, generations and generations, from genetics to genetics.

Through my study, I have found:

The key to changing our inside world, is through *Consciousness*.

The way to become more consciousness can be done in several ways, through physical, mental and spiritual exercise, such as Qigong, Yoga, and meditation practice, meditative activities such as doing art or music. It can be achieved through self healing. And this is not something to be done once which will last forever; it is lifelong learning and practicing. I discovered this because of many amazing things that have happened was that I found my ability to connect the healing exercises to almost all the knowledge I have learned, and I have even developed my own techniques and programmes with healing sessions.

I found the whole universe was experienced in my brain, my body, and my heart. I can feel like there is a black hole in my being with all possibilities, there is no fear ahead, nothing can stop me from discovering my life and this world. I feel forever young, same with the world around me. There is a new me, and a new world.

“What ... then ... does it mean to be young in an aging world?” It is for each of us to master the art of self-healing; as we are healing ourselves, the world will be healed, and remain young. I would love to share my

experiences and techniques to help others to find their own way to this consciousness.

Inspired by my own life in this world, I would like to write about my research, about how to master the art of self-healing referencing all the work I have gathered over the years of researching, reading, studying, experimenting and analysing in area of Language, Literature, Philosophy, Psychology, Anthropology, Quantum Physics, Meta Physic, Neural Science, Brain Science, Religion of the World and the History, Aesthetics, and most recent study of Consciousness Engineering, as well as seeking, collecting, exercising and mastering in Self Healing Practice such as Indian Yoga, the Kundalini Meditation, Chinese QiGong exercises and the Meditation, also the Western Self-Hypnosis and Affirmation Therapy.

I have been healing and healed myself by practicing my self-created healing practice; I am living a life with ease and joy as a single mother with a five year old boy and a baby due in a month. I operate my own business, doing my art and production, and maintain a body and face of age 20<sup>th</sup> in age 30<sup>th</sup>. I am also blessed to have some friends who stand beside me

I am writing about my self-healing story in the book<How Did I Become A Meditator- why meditate> which tells the history of my real life experience in discovering the science of the benefits of Meditation, to demonstrate to the world and human, it exist a powerful practice for our physical, mental, and spiritual healing, and can also keep us young.

After many years of self healing practice and non-stop research, I decided to create a full meditation session <The New World Wholeness and Synergy Meditation> for different levels of meditators, which I have been experimenting for over 2 years on my own and others. The scientific research is based on the research for my book <Healing and Meditation>.

The same time, I have always been working on creating other sorts of practices and books in purpose of Self-healing. As example, I have plans to other books titled <The Notebook of Happiness> and <Power of Affirmation>, based on a theory of self-mental and spiritual healing therapy.

The benefits of these Meditation Exercises function on perspectives of the health of human, society, and the nature, in

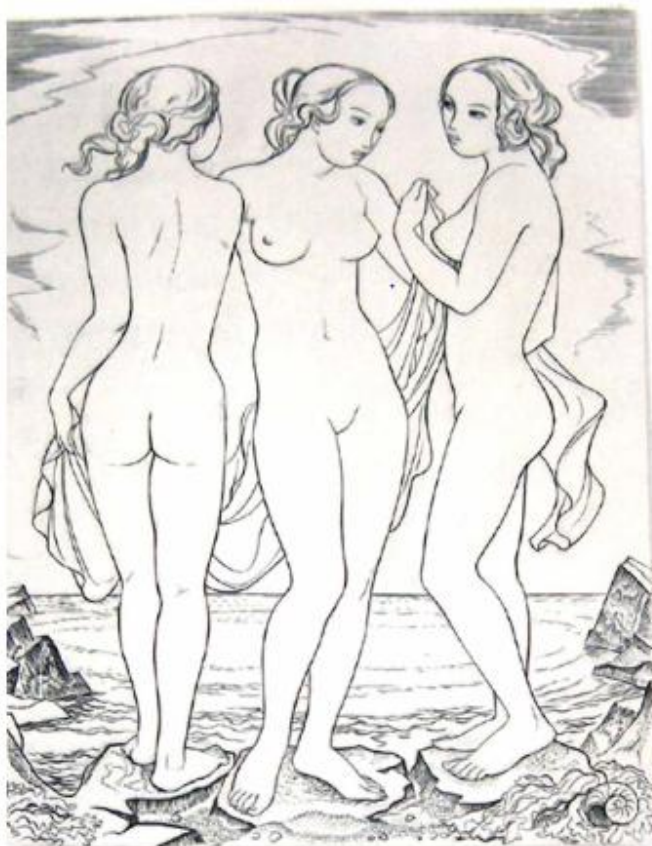
1. Healing in 3 whole human life dimension including Physical, Mental, and Spiritual by synergizing 6 human senses as ( smell, see, hear, taste, feel, and aware)
2. Stimulating and restoring our inner life force energy.
3. Providing a guidance of Inner self well-being and future self success visualization.
4. To help people to heal oneself in this seems unhealthy, stressful, aging, frustrating and separating world we are living right now,
5. with ease, peace, creativity, consciousness and love.

It is my belief that if we are healed, the world will remain young. This is further to lead us to a bright new world and human evolutionary progression.-The AWAKENING to human CONSCIOUSNESS

I feel passionate and satisfied with all that I have achieved so far in my life. I have realized that this would be the mission of my life, be a healer, to heal the people, and heal the world.

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## **New Artwork**



## ***Paintings by Olivia Tasaka***

### Artist's Statement

I create art first and foremost as an emotional outlet. The beings and creatures present in my work, sometimes human and sometimes not, are often personifications of a feeling or inspired by my daydreaming. I am somewhat of a maximalist in my artwork and aim to create a canvas that is a unified piece, yet full of hidden details and drawings hidden under layers of paint.

My interest in art started the moment that I could hold a pencil, and from then on I was drawing in the margins of every notebook I owned and experimenting with different mediums whenever I could. I only truly discovered painting about a year ago, and I fell in love with the bright, bold colours and almost infinite layers that acrylic paints provide. I realized that I could create my own world on a blank canvas in a way that didn't feel possible with any other medium. Today, I would describe my art style as being playful and colourful, yet also tinged with darkness. I aim to toe the line between beautiful and grotesque, creating works that can feel both magical and unnerving at the same time.

Olivia Tasaka

Vancouver April, 2021



**4 Breadsticks 99 Cheese**





**Eeb**









**I Wanna Meet MegaGod**





**Romantic Gateway to Mars**

## ***Paintings by Olivia Harks***

### Artist's Statement

I've been drawing for many years and recently began painting in oils.

My art is inspired by exploring dreams and imagination, as well as the beauty of the natural world.

I paint to express emotions and ideas that I don't have words for."

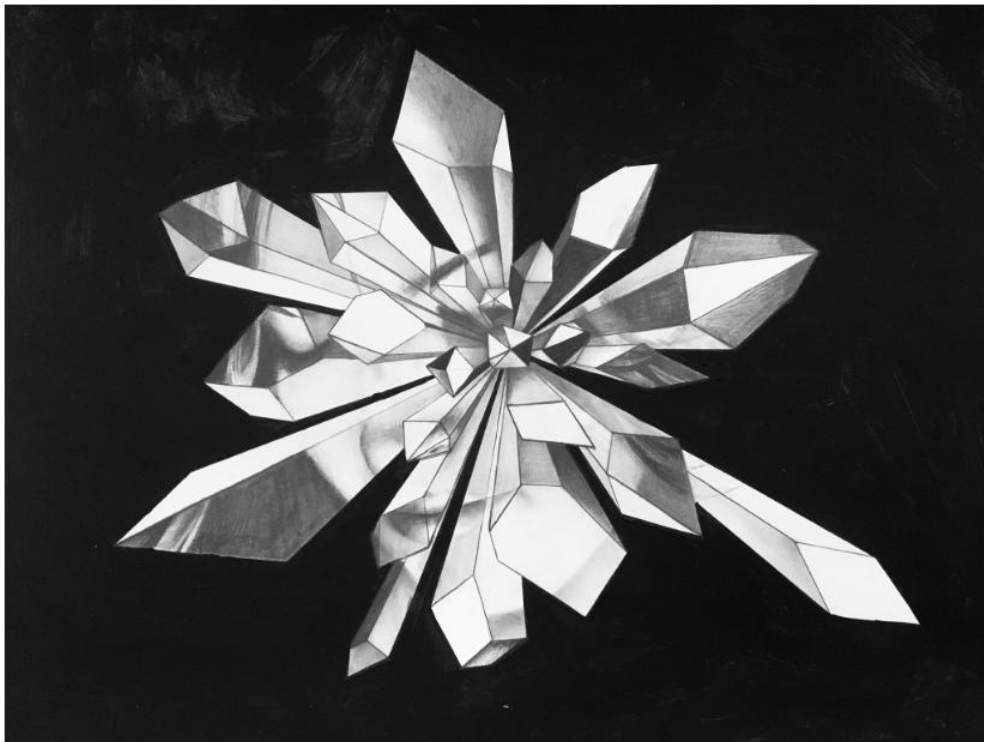
Olivia Harks

Vancouver, BC

April 2021



















## ***The Artistry of Camilla d'Errico***

Camilla d'Errico is an Ottawa based digital and comic artist who has a diploma in Illustration and Design from Capilano College (Now CapU) in North Vancouver. Her art style includes Lowbrow art.

She now does artwork for a wide gamut of patrons including Disney as well as a bevy of Comic book and graphic novel publishers.

Here are some of her earlier works. That were first published in *This Great Society Magazine*.



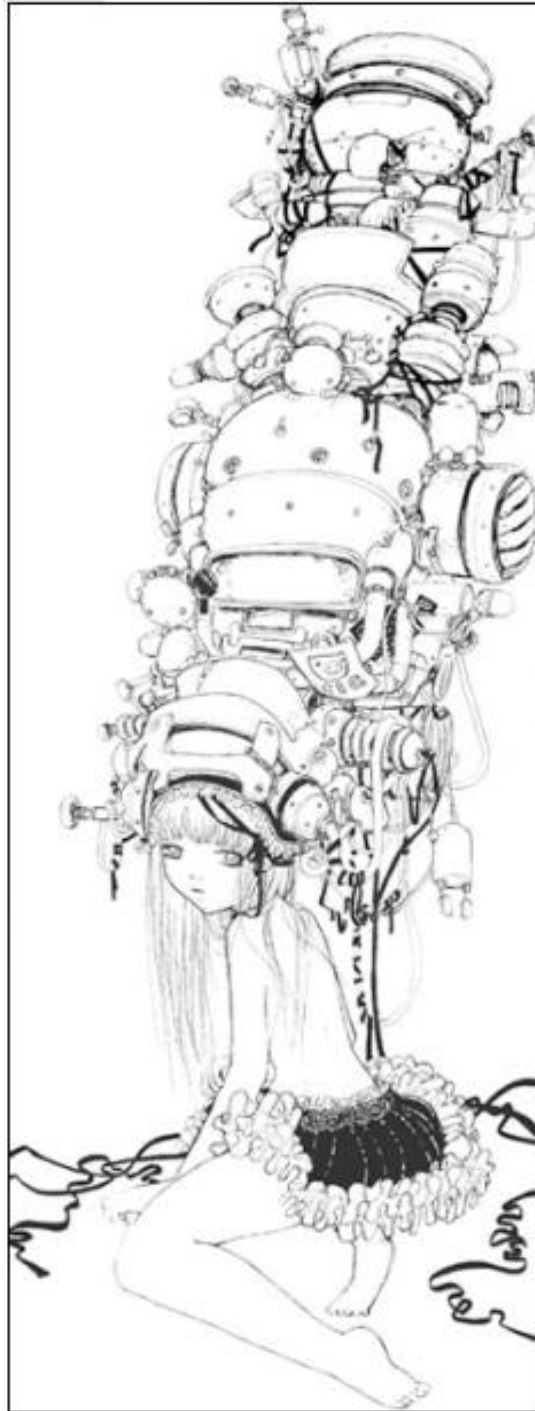


**Cotton Candy Curly Cue**



**Dressed Up Disorder**





**Mountainhead**



**Nature's Course**



**Overtures of Grace**



**Pink Twin Rainbow**



**Resurrected Bone Collective**





**Tea Party**



**The Ill Fated Binding**

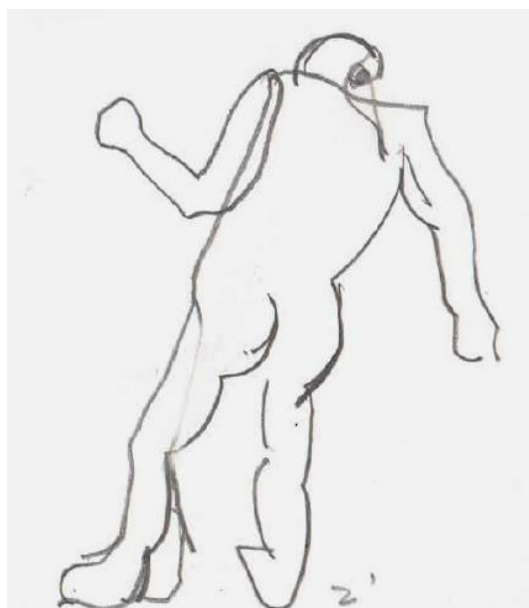
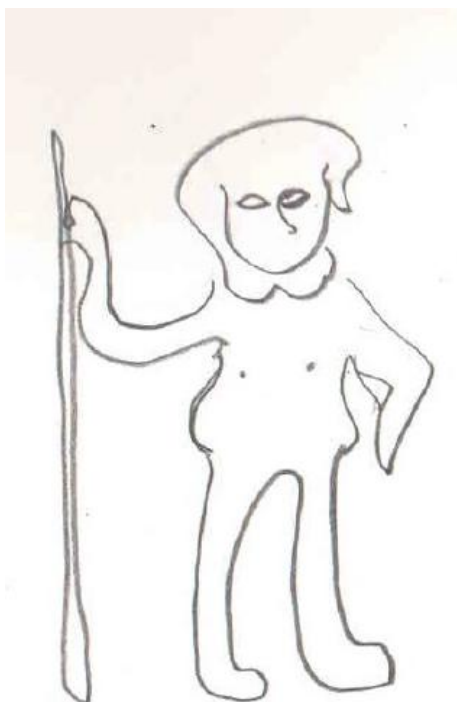


**Upsidedown Mirror**



**Yellow Bone Crown**

***Sketches of a Male Model by Salome***

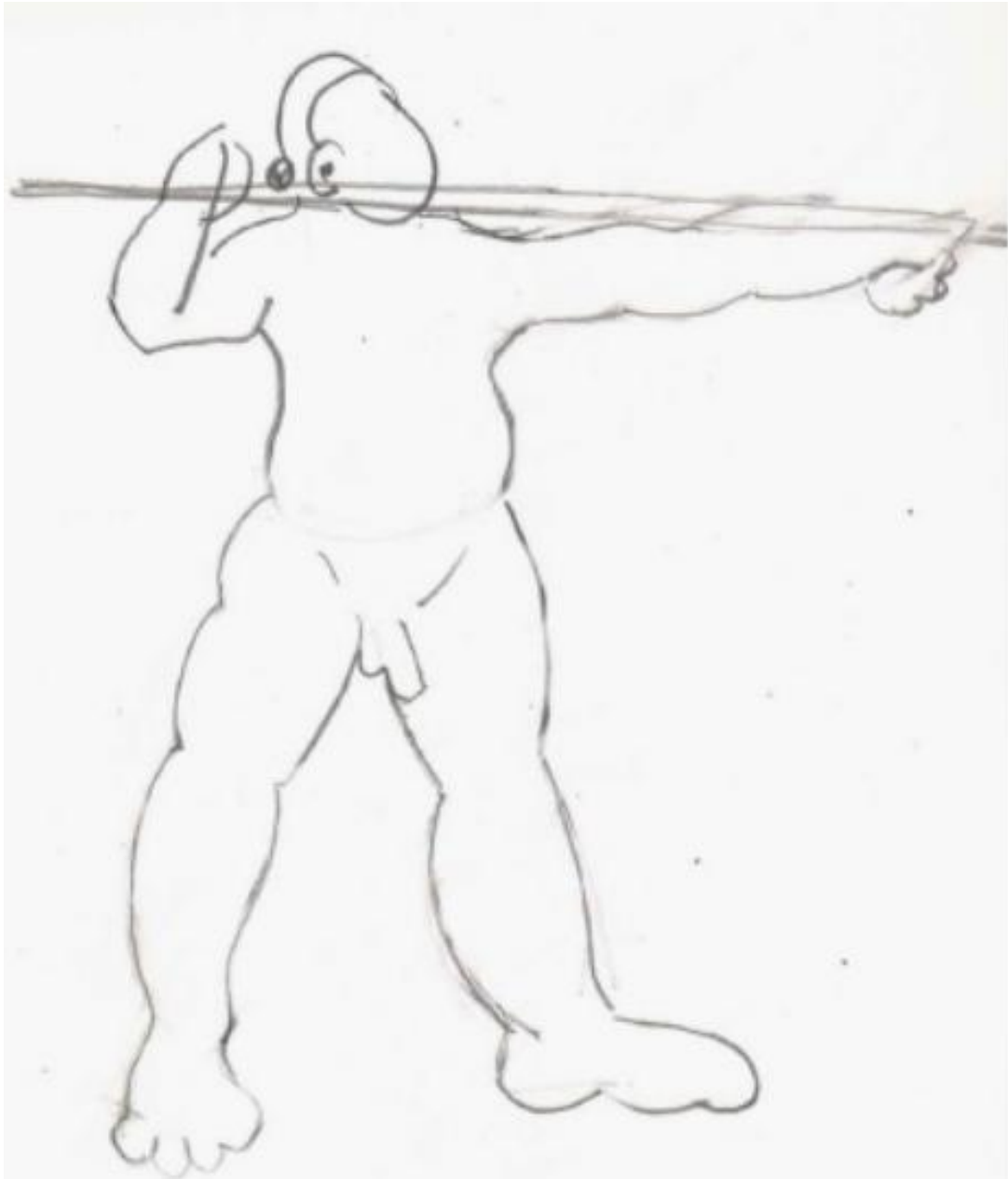












## **Works from the Modern Era**

***Seven Pictorials of Kiki de Montparnasse by ManRay***















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***Love and Happiness in the Time of Covid by Patrick Bruskiewich***

## Chapter One: A Gaggle of Girls

As I sat to begin writing this book something uplifting happened. We live in sad times, if we decide to call them sad times, and trying time if we call them so. But they don't necessarily need to be called that.

I was walking back home from the market with my arms laden with groceries when I came across a dozen girls gathered together in a gaggle. They were somewhere between thirteen and sixteen in age. It being an awkward age it was kind of hard to tell as they cuddled. I could guess it must have been one of their birthdays and they felt the need to gather together, as girls need to, to celebrate. After many weeks of isolation they obviously needed to see their friends.

As I approached the gaggle their body language tensed and I could tell that they had already heard an earful from other people for gathering and not 'following the social distancing rules' and well... doing what would have been normal for them on the birthday of a close friend.

I could see a lot going on. They were sitting on a bench and then when the bench ran out of space they sat on their laps and there were a few towers three girls tall ... they were cuddling, as girls need to when they are stressed out.

As I walked by I smiled and when I said “they were by far the happiest people I have seen in months” they let out a collective and very nervous giggle. They invited me to stop and chat for a while, which I did.

Perhaps it was because they wanted to know why I had not been judgmental and tell them not to sit so close. Perhaps they were expecting me to yell SOCIAL DISTANCING! Indeed, after a few polite words of chit-chat one of the more courageous asked me about this. “Why ...”

And so I told them why.

As a scientist I had been keeping close tabs on the Covid-19 Pandemic here in Canada, and elsewhere in the world. I had been passing some recommendations to the Canadian Government, to the Foreign and Commonwealth office in London and on occasion to the US State Department through the US Ambassador in Canada.

I explained to them based on what was then known about Covid-19 that as girls who had been social distancing and being in their teens they had a very small chance of becoming infected by Covid-19 and an even smaller chance of ‘succumbing to it.’

“Succumbing?” One of the girls asked and before I could explain what it meant one of her friends whispered something into her ear and she said “Ohhh” with a sad expression on her face. I said “in scientific words it is called mortality ...”

There was an awkward and perhaps philosophical pause. I broke the silence by saying “I bet it someone’s birthday!”

“How did you know?” One of them said.

And I smiled. “It is obvious that you are not just happy to be together, you are happy to be together on your friend’s birthday!” One of the girls blushed and I so said “I bet it is your birthday.”

Sure it was a subtle clue but it worked. She nodded. “How did you know?”

I smiled and said “I read minds.” They giggled and had a surprised look on their face. “Really,” one of them said and the asked “can you tell me what I am thinking?”

“Are you testing me?” I queried back.

She nodded.

So I took up their challenge. I played a Houdini mime and after a few theatrics I said “It will be your birthday next.”

She squealed in excitement, jumping off her friend’s lap, rushing to stand in front of me. I looked at her and said “I bet it will be your fifteenth birthday.”

Her jaw fell open. “How did you know?”

“Didn’t I tell you that I read minds?” Before I knew it the girls had all bounded up off the bench and were in a circle around me.

“Tell me my age,” one and then another and another demanded.

So I took up the challenge. “Each of you, think of your age and I will read your minds.” I got all but two of their ages correct. One I was a year too old and then other a year too young, so it kind of averaged out.

By the time I was finished I was surprised they hadn’t figured out how I had done this bit of magic. Sitting cuddle together it was hard to sense their age, but when they were standing, the girls with hips and the like were past thirteen and those without were not. I do art as a past time and have learned a thing or two about the human form. The more the hip the more past thirteen they were.

When I had done my little bit of magic I gathered up my grocery and was about to be on my way when one of them asked “can you see the future?” They all went silent. I turned back at them and said.

“Yes I can.”

“And ...” the faces glowed with anticipation.



“You will all be gathered here together next year to celebrate your friend’s sixteenth birthday.” And off I went on my way, leaving behind me a happy gaggle of girls.

I am really only reasonably good at reading body language ... Minds less so. But it is possible to sense the psychology of an individual alone, an individual in a group, or the psychology of a group as a whole. Mine is a practical or operation understanding of psychology, learned not in university courses, but in the only university that matters ... the University of Life.

I have been remarkably lucky in my life, despite being born under and living through personal misfortune. In this book you will hear of some of my personal misfortunes. My paternal grandfather had a borrowed expression ...

**What does not kill you will make you stronger.**

As I took leave of this gaggle of girls I had felt instinctively that I must be kind to them and thoughtful as well. They needed to hear from an adult that it was fine to gather together and celebrate their girlish rights of passage. They needed to know that death would not touch them and they can live out a normal life and not be scared of life or worst yet be scarred for life.

This is what I mean by *Love and Happiness in the Time of Covid*. In this book I will hopefully lift your spirits by words. And these words will reflect the realities of my life and the life of the people around me.

It is so easy to feel sorry for ourselves when we go through hardship. Today we are all going through hardship – the hardship of the Corona virus Disease – 2019 (COVID-19). It is an unprecedented moment in the lives of many billions. Covid-19, a nanoscale virus, an all but invisible enemy, is running amok through society, bringing death and hardship to countless numbers. We are in the midst of a pandemic.

**The worst thing to do at this moment of hardship is to feel sorry for ourselves.**

What we are experiencing is as perplexing to our modern scientific age as the plague was to the time of Isaac Newton, or turning the clock back a few hundred years earlier than the 17<sup>th</sup> century, to Europe as a whole during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Before the Spanish Flu, one has to go back to the Black Death (the Bubonic Plague) of 1346 to find a similarly devastating pandemic. Like the many times such hardship has been endured in the past ... war, revolution, pestilence, drought, famine and plague, society will survive. So too can the individual survive as well.

We should not feel sorry for ourselves. We should be thinking about more than ourselves. It is perhaps best to remember back to what our grandparent's generation went through during their lives – the First World

War, the Great Depression, a Second World War and the Cold War to boot! Our grandparents endured far more than what we are presently enduring and they came through their hardships in a fine way.

**We shall come safely through our generation's latest challenge.**

My background is in science – in physics, mathematics and its many applications. One of my pastimes is I host an online internet radio station called *Radio Free Vancouver*. When the first medical reports starting coming out about Covid-19 in late fall of 2019 I undertook a scientific assessment based on the preliminary data and then declared quite publically on RFV that my assessment was that Covid-19 might very well be to our generation what the *Spanish Flu* was to a generation a hundred years ago – to the time of when our grandparents were young. From the beginning of this Pandemic I sensed that it would be worse than the *Hong Kong Flu* of the 1960's. A little later in this book I will explain why. We can only hope that the Covid-19 mortality tally never approaches that of the *Spanish Flu*.

The passage of time helps us to put previous pandemics into perspective, like the plague during Newton's early life, or that before the Renaissance, or the Spanish Influenza of 1918-1920 (which was not of Spanish origin at all but came from the Far East) took the lives of a fair percentage of the population of the world.

The *Spanish Flu* (A/N1H1) afflicted about 500 million people and saw one of ten die. There were only 1.8 billion people on earth in 1918 and so you do

the math. The *Spanish Flu* occurred in the aftermath of a world war when food and medical distribution had been affected by conflict. The *Spanish Flu* afflicted about one of four people alive then and took the lives of around three percent of the population of the world, around 50 million people. This is an estimate. Medical records were incomplete at the time and so the actual number is still uncertain.

Despite all that was going on a century ago our grandparents went on with their lives. They met, got married, settled down, had children and got on with things. They viewed their day to day decisions as a test of their character. They were happy to live their lives – lives very much simpler than our lives a century later. What they endured was a test of their character.

**Our own personal hardship and how we respond to this hardship is a test of our character.**

In the period 1918 to 1922 doctors had no idea what it was that was causing the pandemic. They had to function pretty much in the dark. They could only treat the symptoms, and then most times just barely since the idea of social distancing had yet to be suggested.

Fifteen years after the *Spanish Flu* the electron microscope was invented and scientists finally had the first opportunity to study many types of viruses, including the H1N1 virus that had afflicted so many. The electron microscope was invented because even the best optical microscopes could

not image the H1N1 virus. In the 1930's doctors had a chance to review their treatment protocols and learn valuable lessons about efficacy in treating H1N1. In many ways H1N1 was the first of the modern day pandemics.

**Science has progressed remarkably since the H1N1 pandemic of 1918-1922.**

It was learned that the virus originated somewhere in China and found its way through Canada, then the US and Europe through some migrant workers who had arrived and had taken the trans-Canada railway. It was an example as to how clustering and mobility spreads disease. Today we still have to confront the issue of clustering and mobility – hence the need for social distancing and quarantines. Unlike the Spanish Flu which afflicted almost immediately, the Covid-19 virus has the troubling feature that a carrier may be asymptotic – they can be afflicted yet not show any symptoms.

That is how the first case of Covid-19 arrived in Canada, the UK, the US and elsewhere in the world. Covid-19 originated in or around the city of Wuhan in China. My assessment is that the first cases that found its way outside of China occurred around the time of the *Wuhan Military Games* in October 2019 – but more will be said of this anon.

We might also remember back to other pandemics such as the *Hong Kong Flu* of 1968 which may have killed between one to four million people world-wide during the period 1968 to 1970. Over the past fifty years since

the Hong Kong Flu medical science had progressed so that treatments for pandemics had improved markedly. We know how to extract the genome of viruses and track their migration and mutation.

For instance we know as of July 2020 that 85 percent of the Covid-19 cases in Vancouver came to this city from Europe – only 5 percent have come here from China. I suspect that athletes that attended the Wuhan Military Games in October 2019 returned home afflicted with a mild form of the Covid-19 virus and that the virus not only spread asymptotically but may have mutated into a more virulent strain within a matter of mere weeks. The European epicenter for this mutation may have been Germany, Spain or Italy. We can see that in how the genome for Covid-19 has changed and grown in length. The original virus has about 8,000 nucleotides in its RNA. It now has more than 30,000 nucleotides in its RNA.

A lesser known modern day flu pandemic which started in late 1956 and continued on through 1958 became known as *The Asian Flu* (it originated from Guizhou China) killed an estimated 1 million people world-wide. Each pandemic is different, migrating and mutating in different ways. Some afflict the old, like Covid-19, and some the young like the Hong Kong Flu. And some afflicted mostly the old and young like the Spanish Flu. During both the *Hong Kong Flu* and the *Asian Flu* an estimated 33,000 citizens of the UK died. In the US an estimated 100,000 people died in both the *Hong Kong Flu* and the *Asian Flu*.

It is worth noting that in 1977 there was a minor flu epidemic that was isolated to the northeastern parts of China and would run rampant in Russia. It would become known as the Russian Flu and was in some sense reminiscent of the Russian Flu of 1889 – 1890 (which killed 13,000 Americans, and a million people worldwide).

**Pandemics appear to be inevitable and each unique in their own character.**

As of the writing of this book the Covid-19 pandemic has infected around 25 million people with a mortality rate of between 3 to 5 percent. While we focus on mortality rates, the recovery rate has been twelve to fifteen times higher than the mortality rate. Yet, some forty percent of the people infected with Covid-19 are still being treated for their affliction.

In comparison, the typical seasonal flu has a mortality rate that is one-tenth as great as that of Covid-19, about 0.3 percent of the population as a whole. In a sense this is a benchmark against which a comparison may be made. Each year in the United States, the UK and Canada tens of thousands die because of the seasonal flu strains, some of which are remaining virus strains from the 1956 and 1968 pandemics. Yet life goes on!

The only way we can keep Covid-19 from becoming another tragedy on the scale of previous pandemics is if we take the knowledge and experience we have accumulated from previous pandemics and practice good public policy. We need to be wise in what we do and it is important we try to get on with

our lives, as best we can. A Lancet article about the Asian and the Hong Kong Flu is herein.

When the girls gathered together for their friend's birthday they were being wise in their own way. Can you see how? One aspect of this pandemic is the effect the pandemic and social distancing is having on the psychology of people, especially the most vulnerable.

They were not being ignorant, they were being wise. I am not saying it is good to gather in such gaggles. I am saying it was good to be there for the important moments. They instinctively knew that the benefits of celebrating their friend's fifteenth birthday outweigh their risks of catching Covid.19.

**If wisdom is bliss ... it is a folly to be ignorant.**

### **A Lancet Perspective Article by Mark Honigsbaum**

The Art of Medicine: Revisiting the 1957 and 1968 influenza pandemics  
{Published online by Lancet, 25 May, 2020}

The virus emerged in China in the winter of 1957 and spread rapidly worldwide via ships, aeroplanes, and trains. In April, it sparked a major epidemic in Hong Kong, where about 250 000 people were infected, and by June India had seen over a million cases. Shortly afterwards, it made landfall in the UK, and by September outbreaks were being reported in England, Wales, and Scotland. General practitioners were “amazed at the



extraordinary infectivity of the disease” and the suddenness with which it attacked younger age groups. Yet, while some members of the College of General Practitioners called for the UK Government to issue a warning about the dangers presented by the virus and coordinate a national response, the ministry of health demurred. Instead, the virus was permitted to run its course.

The 1957 outbreak was not caused by a coronavirus—the first human coronavirus would not be discovered until 1965— but by an influenza virus. However, in 1957, no one could be sure that the virus that had been isolated in Hong Kong was a new pandemic strain or simply a descendant of the previous 1918–19 pandemic influenza virus.

The result was that as the UK’s weekly death count mounted, peaking at about 600 in the week ending Oct 17, 1957, there were few hysterical tabloid newspaper headlines and no calls for social distancing. Instead, the news cycle was dominated by the Soviet Union’s launch of Sputnik and the aftermath of the fire at the Windscale nuclear reactor in the UK.

By the time this influenza pandemic—known colloquially at the time as “Asian flu”—had concluded the following April, an estimated 20 000 people in the UK and 80 000 citizens in the USA were dead. Worldwide, the pandemic, sparked by a new H2N2 influenza subtype, would result in more than 1 million deaths.

The subsequent 1968 influenza pandemic—or “Hong Kong flu” or “Mao flu” as some western tabloids dubbed it—would have an even more dramatic impact, killing more than 30 000 individuals in the UK and 100 000 people in the USA, with half the deaths among individuals younger than 65 years—the reverse of COVID-19 deaths in the current pandemic. Yet, while at the height of the outbreak in December, 1968, *The New York Times* described the pandemic as “one of the worst in the nation’s history”, there were few school closures and businesses, for the most, continued to operate as normal.

The relative unconcern about two of the largest influenza pandemics of the 20th century—the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* estimates that the 1968 pandemic, due to an H3N2 influenza virus, was responsible for between 1 million to 4 million deaths globally—presents a marked contrast and, to some critics, a rebuke to today’s response to COVID-19 and the heightened responses to outbreaks of other novel pathogens, such as avian and swine influenza. “When hysteria is rife, we might try some history”, opined Simon Jenkins in an article in *The Guardian* titled “Why I’m taking the coronavirus hype with a pinch of salt”. “The [1968] pandemic raged over three years, yet is largely forgotten today”, commented *The Wall Street Journal*, “a testament to how societies are now approaching a similar crisis in a much different way”.

The ultimate testament to the supposed stoicism of earlier generations, according to this line of thought, is the 1918–19 influenza pandemic, in which at least 50 million people worldwide perished, but which resulted in

few public monuments and was largely “forgotten” by the collectivity of society.

But were people really more stoical in 1918, 1957, and 1968? Or were there other factors that might account for the dampened social and emotional responses to these pandemics? And what should historians make of functionalist and, arguably, selective readings of history that seek to draw moral lessons from the past?

To answer these questions it is necessary to understand the origins of the modern preoccupation with pandemics. Before the mid-19th century, few medical commentators used the term pandemic. That only began to change in the 1890s with the arrival of bubonic plague from southern China— what became known as the Third Plague Pandemic—and the Russian influenza pandemic that broke out in St Petersburg in 1889 and which was seen to spread rapidly to Berlin, London, and New York through ship and rail connections.

However, perhaps the crucial factor was the way that Victorian epidemiology and the science of vital statistics made the pandemic form of influenza “visible” to physicians in the UK who had long been sceptical of influenza, then viewed by some as a suspect Italian term for the common cold.

Statistics had long been used in the insurance and annuity businesses, but it was only in the 1840s that William Farr, the chief statistician to the General

Register Office in the UK, began to use statistics in a systematic way to measure variations in the health of populations and the occurrence of epidemics. One of the most powerful tools in Farr's kit was the "excess death rate", calculated by subtracting the number of deaths observed during an epidemic from the average during nonepidemic seasons.

In 1847–48, Farr had observed that influenza increased respiratory deaths in London by about 5000 compared with non-epidemic years. However, because of the difficulty of distinguishing influenza from other respiratory diseases, physicians had attributed just 1157 deaths to influenza and the remainder to asthma, bronchitis, and pneumonia.

To persuade doctors of their error, and convince them that influenza ought to be taken as seriously as cholera and other notifiable diseases, Farr tabulated excess respiratory deaths and made them a regular feature of the annual mortality tables. In this way, he thought, statistics would spur sanitary reform and "banish panic".

What Farr could not have foreseen is that by making the risks presented by influenza and other forms of respiratory disease more visible to the medical profession, his statistical innovations would have the opposite effect. This was partly because it now became possible to measure the intervals between the peaks in excess deaths from respiratory diseases and show that influenza pandemics occurred in waves, with the second and third waves frequently resulting in more severe disease, and more deaths, than the first.

Forearmed with this knowledge, medical officers of health could alert populations to the pandemic threat ahead of time and issue advice on isolation and social distancing measures designed to reduce the peaks or, as we would say today, flatten the curve.

Another crucial factor was the media: thanks to the expansion of telegraphic communications and the growth of mass market newspapers in the late Victorian period, it now became possible to telegraph news of the spreading infection ahead of its arrival, hence *The Lancet's* claim in 1890 that “dread” of the Russian influenza had been “started by telegraph”.

Some critics of the UK Government’s response to COVID-19 have levelled similar charges at today’s tabloid press and at disease modellers whose initial forecast that, in the absence of suppressive measures, severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 could result in the deaths of 500 000 people in the UK has been widely credited with persuading the UK Government to reverse course and institute a strict lockdown. But is it really necessary, they ask, to risk plunging the UK into an economic depression through lockdown measures designed to prevent a wave of mortality given that deaths attributed to COVID-19 are broadly in line with those seen in previous pandemic years? There was no panic in 1957 and 1968, runs this argument, so why the panic today?

It is questionable whether deaths attributed to COVID-19 are comparable to those recorded during previous influenza pandemics, given that between March and early May, 2020, alone the UK Office for National Statistics

recorded 55 000 excess deaths compared with the same period last year. Furthermore, it will not be possible to obtain an accurate accounting of the total excess deaths due to COVID-19 in 2020 before 2021 at the earliest and by then, assuming a vaccine is not deployed in the meantime, many thousands more people will most likely have died from COVID-19. However, critics of the UK Government's response are perhaps right to point to the role of epidemiology and statistical modelling in propagating fear.

Unlike today, in 1957 epidemiologists did not have the ability to track the emergence of a novel pathogen in China— indeed, the initial signal was missed by WHO, meaning that the first that influenza experts knew of the “Asian flu” pandemic was when *The New York Times* published the report about the outbreak in Hong Kong. In 1957, virologists did not understand the genetic mechanisms behind the emergence of new pandemic strains, hence the initial confusion as to whether this influenza virus was a variation of the H1N1 influenza virus of 1918.

More importantly, realising that influenza was usually associated with mild or inapparent infections and that quarantines were impractical, public health authorities in the USA and the UK made no effort to mitigate the spread of the infection by, for instance, introducing border checks or strict isolation measures. Nor did governments consider suppressing the basic reproduction number to buy time for hospitals and front-line health workers: as Hugh Pennington, then a young medical student at St Thomas' Hospital, London, UK, recalled in a recent article in the *London Review of Books*, this was

because intensive care units were not yet established in 1957 and ventilator technology was rudimentary. Nor, when the second wave of the pandemic arrived in the autumn of 1957, were hospitals overwhelmed by patients. Similarly, a review of hospital admissions in Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and New York, USA, during the 1968 pandemic found that although patient numbers increased by 3%, hospitals coped with the influx. Indeed, the only real strategy considered by health authorities in the UK and the USA was vaccination, but the vaccines arrived too late in both the 1957 and 1968 influenza pandemics to make a difference.

Not everyone was happy with the UK Government's passivity, however. "The public seems under the impression that nothing can be done to prevent the calamity that is threatened by the advance of influenza in the Far East", argued Dr Kitching in a letter to the *BMJ* in June, 1957. "On the contrary there is a great deal that the Government can do; by acting at once they may save hundreds of thousands of lives."

But the ministry of health was not listening. Instead, fearing that the press would have a field day if it issued a prominent warning about the pandemic, it left it to local medical officers of health to decide on the most appropriate course of action. "The general assessment seems to be that eventually [the influenza] will affect up to 20 percent of the population", wrote the then junior health minister John Vaughan-Morgan. "This is a heaven-sent topic for the press during the 'silly season'".



Vaughan-Morgan was right to be concerned about the press's reaction. At the end of July, 1957, the *Daily Mail* issued a dire warning about a “new outbreak of Asian flu” when a 1-year-old girl fell ill in Fulham. *The Guardian* surrendered its cool editorial tone for a headline reading: “Crash Fight Against Asian ‘Flu’”.

However, such headlines were the exception and for the most part newspapers seem to have behaved responsibly during the pandemic. Publishers were also reluctant to be seen to be stoking public fears, a reflection perhaps of heightened anxieties due to the Cold War and the launch of Sputnik, as well as greater respect for medical experts and deference to authority.

Indeed, Charles Graves, the brother of the novelist Robert Graves, recalled how when news of the influenza outbreak reached his publisher, Icon, it put the publication of his book *Invasion by Virus* on hold, citing concerns about “frightening the public”. The result was that it was not until 1968 that Icon finally agreed to release the title, having been reassured in the meantime that influenza in 1957 “was no real killer”. In his book Graves compared the 1957 and 1968 pandemics to that of the 1918–19 influenza pandemic and asked “Could it happen again?” His answer was yes and that the UK had been lucky that the recent pandemics had been of a “mild type” of influenza. He closed by reassuring readers that history was unlikely to repeat itself before 1998, “by which time the medical profession will know a great deal more about immunisation than it did in 1918—or does now.”

Graves was right on both counts, but wrong to think that better medical knowledge of vaccines and statistical modelling would reduce public anxiety about pandemics.

Mark Honigsbaum

<http://www.markhonigsbaum.co.uk/>

Mark Honigsbaum is a medical historian and author of *The Pandemic Century: A History of Global Contagion from the Spanish Flu to Covid 19* (published by W H Allen on June 4, 2020).

## **Chapter Two: God Save the Queen!**

In April 2020 the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of the United Kingdom was hospitalized with a severe case of COVID-19.

It appeared to be a grim moment for the life of the UK and its brothers and sisters in the Commonwealth. That evening a ray of light shone despite the grim news.



**Fig. 1: Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II**

Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II, who rarely gives public addresses, gave an April 5 speech to the United Kingdom on COVID-19 to provide a sense of unity and purpose:

“I’m speaking to you at what I know is an increasingly challenging time, a time of disruption in the life of our country, a disruption that has brought grief to some, financial difficulties to many, and enormous changes to the daily lives of us all. I want to thank everyone on the NHS frontline, as well as care workers and those carrying out essential roles who selflessly continue their day-to-day duties outside the home in support of us all. I’m sure the nation will join me in assuring you that what you do is appreciated, and every hour of your

hard work brings us closer to a return to more normal times. I also want to thank those of you who are staying at home, thereby helping to protect the vulnerable, and sparing many families the pain already felt by those who have lost loved ones.”

“Together we are tackling this disease, and I want to reassure you that if we remain united and resolute, then we will overcome it. I hope in the years to come everyone will be able to take pride in how they responded to this challenge, and those who come after us will say the Britons of this generation were as strong as any, that the attributes of self-discipline, of quiet, good-humored resolve, and of fellow feeling still characterize this country. The pride in who we are is not a part of our past, it defines our present and our future.”

“The moments when the United Kingdom has come together to applaud its care and essential workers will be remembered as an expression of our national spirit, and its symbol will be the rainbows drawn by children. Across the Commonwealth and around the world, we have seen heartwarming stories of people coming together to help others, be it through delivering food parcels and medicines, checking on neighbors, or converting businesses to help the relief effort. And though self-isolating may at times be hard, many people of all faiths and of none are discovering that it presents an opportunity to slow down, pause and reflect in prayer or meditation.”

“It reminds me of the very first broadcast I made in 1940, helped by my sister. We as children spoke from here at Windsor to children who had been evacuated from their homes and sent away for their own safety. Today, once again, many will feel a painful sense of separation from their loved ones, but now as then, we know deep down that it is the right thing to do. While we have faced challenges before, this one is different. This time we join with all nations across the globe in a common endeavor. Using the great advances of science and our instinctive compassion to heal, we will succeed, and that success will belong to every one of us.”

“We should take comfort that while we may have more still to endure, better days will return. “

“We will be with our friends again. “

“We will be with our families again.”

“We will meet again. “

“But for now, I send my thanks and warmest good wishes to you all.”

In her speech the Queen mentioned her address made in 1940 for the BBC Children’s hour. Out of curiosity I found and read her October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1940 address (she was sixteen going on seventeen when she gave this address):



**Fig. 2: Princess Elizabeth, BBC Children's Hour, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1940**

*"In wishing you all good evening, I feel that I am speaking to friends and companions who have shared with my sister and myself many a happy children's hour."*

*"Thousands of you in this country have had to leave your homes and be separated from your fathers and mothers. My sister Margaret Rose and I feel so much for you, as we know from experience what it means to be away from those you love most of all. To you living in new surroundings, we send a message of true sympathy and at the same time we would like to thank the kind people who have welcomed you to their homes in the country."*

*"All of us children who are still at home think continually of our friends and relations who have gone overseas, who have travelled*

*thousands of miles to find a wartime home and a kindly welcome in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the United States of America. My sister and I feel we know quite a lot about these countries: our father and mother have so often talked to us of their visits to different parts of the world. So it is not difficult for us to picture the sort of life you are all leading and to think of all the new sights you must be seeing and the adventures you must be having. But I am sure that you too are often thinking of the old country. I know you won't forget us. It is just because we are not forgetting you that I want, on behalf of all the children at home, to send you our love and best wishes to you and to your kind hosts as well."*

*"Before I finish, I can truthfully say to you all that we children at home are full of cheerfulness and courage. We are trying to do all we can to help our gallant sailors, soldiers and airmen and we are trying too to bear our own share of the danger and sadness of war. We know, every one of us, that in the end all will be well, for God will care for us and give us victory and peace. And when peace comes, remember, it will be for us, the children of today, to make the world of tomorrow a better and happier place."*

*"My sister is by my side and we are both going to say goodnight to you. Come on, Margaret." (Margaret: "Goodnight children").*

*"Goodnight, and good luck to you all."*



I was concerned in hearing that the Prime Minister of the UK was ill with COVID-19. After watching the Queen's April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020 address I felt better and slept well that night.

After listening to her inspiring speech I felt a renewed sense of purpose and knew we would make it safely through this pandemic. God Save the Queen!

### **Chapter Three: The Hong Kong Flu**

I was one of the many millions who came down with *Hong Kong Flu*. Being a young boy I was in fact in grave peril. I am too young to have been around during the *Asian Flu* pandemic of 1957.

As a young boy I remembered being bed-bound for several weeks during the *Hong Kong Flu* pandemic in the fall of 1968, isolated from family and friends, bored of watching daytime movies. I remember the coughing, the fever the dehydration and the slow and almost inevitable decline to pneumonia. Luckily I survived, partly because of the professional care of my uncle Dr. Ed Tworek who was then the chief surgeon at Edmonton General Hospital.

My mother wanted me to stay super warm and so she cranked up the heat and our natural gas-fired central air handling unit was filling my bedroom with noxious and dusty moist hot air. My uncle the doctor arrived each day and insisted I keep my bedroom window open to let the super dry winter air

in. Well, that super dry winter air saved my life. It removed the fluids faster from my lungs than my struggling little lungs could fill them.

The following morning I took to standing on my head to empty my lungs of fluid for I knew that I needed to do something to keep myself from drowning in my own fluids. In the mirror I already had that off blue colour of a dying boy. My coughing could have waked the dead.

**One simple thing was the difference between life and death for me and that thing was good medical care.**

The only good thing about having been bed-bound with the *Hong Kong Flu* was I missed having to take geometry at school. Our math teacher at the time was as old as Euclid's Elements and gladly he gave me a pass on my math mark for that month!

Others, like my great-grandmother, were not so lucky. She was one of the many hundreds of thousands who died during the *Hong Kong Flu* Pandemic. I had met my great-grandmother only once, as a very young boy, two years before when I visited Montreal during EXPO '67. My mother was French Canadian and her maternal grandmother was the matriarch of her family. My mother grew up in the house in Montreal that my great-grandmother lived in. The house was a four story old brownstone with a walk up stairs on the outside, like many of the old houses you see in Montreal.

When I met my great grandmother in 1967 I found her to be a kind and attentive lady. She enjoyed the visits of her extended family, most of all her great grand children. She had given birth to three children who together had given birth to ten children who had, by the year I met her had given birth to a dozen great grand children, of which I was the fourth oldest (a good half-dozen more would follow within two years). Yes, we are a large Catholic family.

When she died my great-grandmother was one hundred and four years. She was born in 1865, even before Canada became the Dominion of Canada in 1867, a time when Queen Victoria still reigned. My great-grandmother was a young girl during the Franco-Prussian War, was in her thirties during the Boer War at the beginning of the twentieth century, in her fifties during the First World War and was in her seventies when the Second World War spilled across the world. Even at a hundred and two, when I met her for the one and only time, she was clear in mind and in good health. If the *Hong Kong Flu* had not gotten her she would have lived a few more good years, perhaps even to one hundred and ten. By the way, her philosophy to a healthy old age was a positive outlook to life and a busy and active mind ... *Mens sana corpus sanum*.

**Mens sana corpus sanum ... a healthy mind in a healthy body.**

When I suffered through my bout of *Hong Kong Flu* I could not stay in bed. As a young boy I needed to be up and about. Sure, I was quarantined in my room and only ventured forth twice a day to the communal bath room, but

even with a stack of books and an old Philips black and white portable television, I soon became isolated. With isolation came boredom and with the extended boredom came depressions. At the time I did not really know what I was experiencing but later in life I would see how depression affected other people and I would come to realize its symptoms and the harm it could cause to a person's psyche.

The best thing I did when I had the *Hong Kong Flu* was to stay active, to get up and move about.

For severe cases of COVID-19 patients are sedated so that they are unconscious. It seems like a severe treatment, but it is a protocol that has helped to save many lives. Perhaps it is so that more of a patient's metabolism is available to fight the infection and not used for other mundane tasks, like watching television or reading, and the like. Once the patient is sedated they are immobile. It seems that one of the basic treatments for Covid-19 that improved the efficacy of treatment is not to let the patient lay still but to rotate the patient so that their lungs can function and heal themselves as best they can. Having gone through my Hong Kong Flu experiences I can attest to the efficacy of this treatment for anything that is afflicting the good functioning of the human lung.

I don't know if I would go so far as to recommend a patient be stood on their head to drain out their lungs of fluid – but heh ... it worked for me at the worst moment of my affliction to the *Hong Kong Flu*. Why I thought of doing this was something my uncle the doctor told me:

## **We are organic machines made of organic materials.**

Three years ago I became seriously ill with the flu once again to the point that I came within mere minutes of dying. My heart was winding down ...60 beats a minute, then fifty five ... then fifty, then ... well you get the picture. I was even in the hospital at the time under observation and no one could tell me what could be done. They gave me saline and after six hours I was well enough to be sent home. For weeks afterwards my heart had an arrhythmia that could best be described as a hiccup. It was eventually diagnosed as a premature ventricular contraction ... what is known as a PVC.

A premature ventricular contraction (PVC) is a irregular heartbeat that originates in the ventricles and disrupts the heart's normal rhythm. It is an early heart beat. The pattern is a normal beat, an extra beat (the PVC), a slight pause, then a stronger-than-normal heart beat, which when severe feels like a hiccup, but instead of being an involuntary contraction of the diaphragm, is instead a super-big contraction of the heart itself! The extra strong beat is because the heart fills with more blood during the pause following the PVC, giving the subsequent beat so much more extra force.

This pattern may occur randomly or at definite intervals. When I was ill a few years ago when these PVCs started to occur it felt like someone was squeezing my heart. The pause after the contraction was also so noticeable that I began to wonder whether my heart would stop all together ... I began

to wonder if it would start beating again. Time is relative and psychological time always seems longer than real time.

Premature ventricular contractions are some of the most common causes of irregular heart rhythms. If you check in your anatomy textbooks you will find that the human heartbeat is triggered by an electrical signal that starts in the brain and then is sent by a neuron down the spine to the heart. This electrical impulse goes to an area of specialized cells in the heart's upper right chamber, the right atrium. The electrical signal moves down through the heart to the atrioventricular node, a cluster of specialized cells in the center of the heart. From the AV node the signal passes along special fibers embedded in the heart walls to the ventricles, the lower chambers. When the electrical current arrives in the ventricles, it causes them to contract and pump oxygen-rich blood out to the body.

After my most recent brush with death my doctors were unable to sort out my heart arrhythmia problem for me, which I found puzzling. In the end I had to do this pretty much by myself. Over the past few years I have managed to deal with much of my heart arrhythmia but subsequent to my most recent illness, when I am super-stressed I still sometime develop these annoying 'hiccups' of the heart.

**Medical Doctors are finding that many patients who survive Covid-19 have ongoing heart issues, including heart arrhythmia.**

In short order I will share with you some of the strategies that I have used to treat my heart arrhythmia and to help strengthen my heart. I have found certain lifestyle choices make a difference. I have also started to take vitamins and certain minerals. It was only when one of my neighbors, Liz who is a nutritionist, gave me some advice. Before you try anything make sure you have talked it over with a medical health practitioner like your doctor, a nurse or a nutritionist.

#### **Chapter Four: An Existential Threat**

You have to love life to survive existential threats to your existence. Wars, revolutions, droughts, famine and plague are such existential threats. The Covid-19 Pandemic is an existential threat to many billions of people. For many billions of humans this is also their first existential threat they have experienced.

I have survived many existential threats to my very being over my life time. Even before I was born I was near death. The time I was in my mother's belly and there was a problem with RH incompatibility, or when she was prescribed thalidomide to deal with her problem pregnancy – she had morning sickness for weeks and weeks – fortunately she threw the drug away after only one or two tablets.

How when I was born and the obstetrician delivering me out from that oh so narrow opening that a natural birth provides pulled a bit too hard with the

forceps and well, did a number on my neck so that for the first few weeks of my life I could not turn my head nor even lift it up off my little pillow.

How for a good minute after I finally popped out I refused to breath and how the obstetrician who delivered me (the same uncle who would later treat me for my *Hong Kong Flu*) had to give me a giant whack to my backside – for which I bopped him in the face with my fist (for the rest of his life every time he saw me he would ask ‘how’s slugger?’).

How, because my mother was so weak from my delivery she could not nurse me and so several women step forward to wet nurse me including an aunt who had just given birth to a daughter (she would sit in the neo-natal ward with her daughter at one breast and me at the other), and how several Catholic nurses in the hospital (this being arranged by my Catholic Aunt unbeknownst to my uncle). Many years later I would be told that more than one of my wet nurses were in fact Catholic nuns who – vow aside – knew this as a graceful way to serve their God and their faith. I owe these kind women my life – many years later in one of my poems I would write God created women’s breasts to make us men envious.

Then I once choked on some food and was saved by a giant whack to my back by my mother. The following year there would be the Hong Kong Flu.

How when I was in my twenties I would hurt my neck and spine rather badly, almost killing myself saving the life of a young officer cadet. At the time I was the youngest naval officer in Canada and one of the youngest



naval officers serving with any N.A.T.O. navies. We were at sea off the coast of British Columbia aboard HMCS Qu'Appelle sailing in company with HMCS McKenzie doing a jack-stay transfer when it went all wrong and I had to intervene, anchoring a force that four or five other men should have been holding, to save the man's life. In doing so I crushed my spine. When it was safe to let go of the hawser I crumbled to the deck like a raggedy-andy and struck my head on the deck plates cracking both my skull and my spine. The last thing I remembered was the deck officer screaming in my face and the Captain of Qu'Appelle ordering him to stand down.

It was not an accident what happened that day. The officer cadets were from Quebec and the deck officer hated French-Canadians. Since I was a bilingual boy from Alberta I was attached to this cohort of officer cadets as a liaison of sorts.

The deck officer was found negligent for what happened that day and left the Royal Canadian Navy not soon afterwards. I was forced to leave the RCN because of the severity of my injuries. I have never received compensation for my injuries.

I spent the next two years learning how to walk again as an out-patient basis at the hospital of the university I was an undergraduate at. This injury robbed me of a normal and active life. Fortunate for me I had my friend Julia who was going through med school at the time and she helped me understand what was happened to my damaged body. I have lived with this injury as best as I can for all my adult life. It turns out that the first injury to

my neck, from the day I came into the world, was what saved my life two decades later, for it seems that side of my neck was abnormally strong because of the shape of the vertebrae.

but I will share with you that every day since I have been in chronic pain. I have learned that the only way to overcome chronic pain is to find ways to stay in constant pleasure. Deep down I am both a hedonist and a Dadaist ... which makes for an interesting life style as you can imagine. But this is a story for another day ...

The spine is the structure which the rest of our body is held up, aligned and controlled (i.e. the spinal cord). The nerves to the heart and other major organs are distributed by the spine. When you pinch or irritate a nerve it affects the body systems the nerves are connected to. I damaged C1 to C& as well as the lower lumbar region of my spine. As it would happen most of the major organs in our upper body have nerves that leave the spine somewhere between C1 and C7. Those organs include the heart, the lungs and the major organs related to the digestive system. Hells bells ...

To make matters worse, my own family ignored or downplayed the nature and severity of my injuries for reasons beyond my comprehension. Sure it was the early 1980's and there was a major downturn. Sure my father had lost a prestigious position with an engineering firm he had help become prosperous. Sure the family had to struggle through a few years of financial hardship and uncertainty ... but money is just money, while life is life. There is a world of difference between money and life itself! It was a very

difficult time for me but thank goodness that my grandfather and my friend Julia were there for me.

Then four years after this my 85 year old grandfather had a heart attack on Christmas Eve and suffered hypoxia and while he lingered on in the hospital for eleven months he was never the same man ever again. My grandfather was waiting curbside near his apartment to be picked up for Christmas Eve dinner by my narcissistic and somewhat arrogant brother who dawdled doing something he thought was more important than looking after his grandfather. I pleaded to let me go pick my grandfather up but my brother refused to hand over the keys to the family car and the more I insisted we go the longer he took to go get my elderly grandfather.

When he finally arrived he found my grandfather face down on the sidewalk and had to give him CPR until the paramedics arrived. Then my brother went to pieces and it was left to me to go to the hospital and sit bedside and hold my grandfather's hand while he struggled to make it through to Christmas Day. At the time my parents were away visiting my maternal grandmother.

In the middle of the night the doctor came and consulted with me about whether they should resuscitate my grandfather if he had another heart attack. The doctor was surprised he had survived so long and it was evident that they had moved him into a private room not expecting him to survive the night. He was being provided palliative care. But my grandfather was a

hearty Pole and I turned to the doctor and said “He has suffered so much. His fate is in God’ hand now, not mine. ”

I felt my grandfather squeeze my hand. He would linger for eleven more months.

As I write this book I remember when in the midst of the worse of my Hong Kong Flu my grandfather, who was in his sixties at the time, would come and visit me, even sometimes swinging by the hospital to pick up my uncle the doctor. My grandfather was a brave man and was not afraid of coming down with the Hong Kong Flu. As a teenager he had come down with the Spanish Flu and had survived, no more worst for wear, while a considerable number of people in the corner of Poland he lived in at the time were not so lucky. His parents, my great grandparents, had survived the Russian pandemic of 1898. I think, apart from my mother, grandfather and uncle, no one else in immediate family spent so much time looking after me in 1968. My paternal grandmother had heart disease and so she helped out through her cooking. From her stove came twice a week a hearty pot of chicken soup.

I remember vividly and with great fondness sitting at my bedroom window, with it open, breathing in the cold crisp night air while I ate a bowl of her chicken soup with crackers. I would sometime do this in the middle of the night, with the lights out, hoping to catch a glimpse of the moon or some stars up in the sky. I once feel asleep under the window and awoke in the

early morning to find my nose and ear lobes tingling in the cold. But my lungs they were clear. The dry winter air had done its job.

When I was recovering from my later neck and back injury I had to be careful about coughing, which when you have latent asthma is very hard to do. So I once again took to sleeping with my window partly open, even in the middle of winter, and well ... I continue to do this to this very day. I now live in a rental apartment and I keep the sliding door ajar all year round. My asthma seems to endure cold air better than hot air. Sometimes my nose and ear lobes tingle in the cold morning. At night if it is too cold I pull my comforter or blanket up over my face just enough to allow a mix of my body heat with fresh air to keep things tolerable. In the morning when I get up I usually have a coughing fit to clear my lungs of phlegm. I usually do some stretching exercises which I have borrowed by the New York City Ballet exercise video either before or during my coughing fit. The two evolutions tend to balance the effect of the other.

As you have probably realized, I have lived at death's door for most of my adult life so existential threats do not really bother me. I am not afraid of dying. When you are dead you do not feel pain. I am more afraid of leading an infirmed or disabled life. I hope that I get through the COVID-19 pandemic without disability.

The COVID-19 pandemic is really not about the individual. As an individual I cannot put myself ahead of the community as a whole. The existential threat society is presently going through is not just one that

relates to the individual, but to entire communities, countries and perhaps even a way of life. How long the Covid-19 pandemic will take to fade away and the long-term effects it will have on society as a whole, are too early to know.

Let us contemplate three scenarios, setting the Spanish Flu Pandemic as a possible ‘worst case scenario.’

Just as different people have their own unique traits; different societies have different capacities to survive existential stresses. I am fortunate to live in a democratic country in the English Speaking world. I live in a Commonwealth country with a Parliamentary system. It is not the wealthiest of English speaking countries, but it is not by far the poorest either. There is a sense of community going into this Pandemic, but it is a necessary question to ask how long that sense of community will continue.

As it happened the last Federal election a few years back saw a minority Parliament elected. This means that Parliament ultimately holds sway and not a handful of Cabinet Ministers. In a time of national emergency it is almost a given that emergency powers are enacted by Cabinet. In the Covid-19 pandemic response by Canada’s Parliament the measures, which includes public spending, are supreme confidence measures, for without the support of a significant number of opposition members, the Government would fall.

If the Canadian Government fell on a budget or confidence matter, given the present and rather unique existential stress to Canada presented by Covid-19,

it is not a given that we would immediately and necessarily go to a Federal election. An election would stress social distancing and probably cause a second wave of infections and mortality.

It is possible that the Governor General of Canada would either ask the Opposition to form a Government, or perhaps even ask the House to Govern itself by selecting an interim Cabinet.

This is an evolving part of the story here in Canada. An added twist is the Government of the Province I live in, British Columbia, also has a minority government held together by a coalition of two parties, and a plurality of one seat.

## **Chapter Five: Chicken Man**

It is interesting how during times of great personal stress how normally inconsequential things take on greater significance.

Vancouver is an expensive city to live in, one of the most expensive in North America. It is perhaps because the city is so beautiful and the lifestyle so laid back that it is a popular place. A little over a decade ago the United Nations polled people and found that 60 percent of the world thought living in Canada to be the best place to live of all countries. The same year, or thereabouts, the Canadian Government asked Canadians the question where they would like to live in Canada and some sixty percent said Vancouver – ergo 36 percent of the world’s population suggested that Vancouver was a

preferred place to reside. Once again, you do the math. Vancouver is not merely a fine place to live, it is also a fine holiday destination.

What does this have to do with the fact that Vancouver is one of the most expensive in North America? For the same reason it is also three square meals away from total chaos. Unlike much of Canada that has open lines of communications and robust chains of supply, the transportation of food, fuel and staples to Vancouver is rather easy to set out of kilter, or disrupt.

A half decade ago in the middle of a major snow storm all fuel deliveries to Vancouver ceased and the price of gasoline spiked, as did the patience of many Vancouver drivers. When the Covid-10 Pandemic was declared there was a period of time when panic buying began to empty the shelves of grocery and convenience stores and people even began to fight among themselves as some hoarding began.

While hoarding was not wide spread in Vancouver but it was still common enough in the early weeks of the crisis to be noticed and to have its more ugly side. One of my colleagues, an outspoken gentleman of Irish heritage, was in a grocery store shopping when he saw a man hoarding chicken at a meat counter, filling his buggy with package after package after package of chicken, while an elderly lady tried her best to snag one package before he took them all. The big bully of the man had put himself between the lady and the meat counter and would not let her pick up a package of chicken.



My friend walked up to the bully, pushed him out of the way and told him to ‘stop hording the chicken.’ My friend then reached down and picked up a package and gave the elderly woman a package of chicken. When the big bully of the man took offense to this, my Irish friend told him “let’s go at it right here and now over the chicken.”

Now the bully of the man was twice as massive as my friend (and so I am told) and would have knocked his block squarely off his shoulders, and they would have gone at it, then and there, were it not for the elderly woman who came to my friend’s defence by calling over the store manager with a suitable explanation. The manager, a woman in her thirties, told the bully of a man he will not be able to purchase the chicken he was hording and asked him to leave her store. He told her to go to hell and so she took up her cell phone which she had in her hand and dialed zero and when the operator came on asked ‘Vancouver Police ...please!’ The bully of a man disappeared in a flash.

My Irish friend gained a friend for life in the way of the elderly women and I understand that whenever they happen upon each other in the marketplace it is a moment for polite chit chat for them both. She has told him that before the chicken incident she felt scared, alone and forgotten and after it she felt safe, visible and acknowledged.

When my friend told me this story I teased my Irish friend by calling him ‘chicken man’ for the reason of the double-entendre – but rest assured he is anything but!

Within minutes of the chicken incidence signs started to appear in this store how patrons would be allowed only *one or two purchases of certain limited products* – all at the discretion of the store manager. This incident occurred in one of the stores in Vancouver of a major food chain and so in short order similar signs started to appear in all the stores of the chain. Within less than a week similar signs appeared throughout the city. The signs spread like an infection ... I would be interested to know how common hording was here in Vncouver during the height of the pandemic.

I myself only witnessed attempts at hording twice in recent months and they were of women trying to horde mounds of toilet paper. One woman had a large family, (some of her kids were with her at the store) and so they gave her a pass, and the other argued in the most inane and absurd fashion for “her rights,” and ended up be told to leave the store in a huff, and empty handed.

**Strangely enough – one of the items that was being horded in Vancouver was toilet paper.**

At one point toilet paper was so scarce the price was twice the normal. So next went the tissue paper .... I myself decided to keep a spare package of toilet paper at hand and being a consummate shopper only purchase it when it was offered at a normal price, which coincided with mid-week delivery days at stores. This brought to mind another of my grandfather’s borrowed expressions.

### **The early bird gets the worm!**

Early on in this crisis it became evident that the lives of the elderly and the more vulnerable became problematic and so stores around Vancouver set aside one or two mornings a week just for the elderly or the more vulnerable where they could shop for food and not run the added risk of interacting with people who might be carriers of the virus: the more vulnerable means patients with health issues, expectant mothers and parents with young families.

### **This I thought was a wonderful idea and an expression of the Love and Happiness we should feel for others.**

Sometimes it is the small things that take on greater significance. I live in an apartment building with an elevator. Whenever I am taking the elevator by myself and it stops at a floor that has a mother and her children waiting, or one of my elderly neighbors waiting, I always step out of the elevator and ask them to take it and say “I will wait for the next one.” I also do this for the women in our building as well (yes ... it is the officer and gentleman in me).

I am never in such a hurry as to not help out others, even if it is in simply, as in the way of a polite gesture. Politeness is the cornerstone of a civilized society. What I receive in return for my politeness is a happy smile and the

knowledge that this is seen as a gesture of kindness. It lifts the spirits of others.

**During times of crisis it is important that we look out for the safety and wellbeing of others, particularly the elderly and the vulnerable.**

In a free market economy where supply and demand determine the price of things, some items became expensive overnight beginning in February 2020, and some food items such as sushi (a staple of Vancouverites) disappeared from stores entirely. It has only been recently that sushi is returning to the stores, a sign of sorts that the worse of the Covid-19 pandemic may be behind us here in Vancouver. The little sushi restaurants have remained closed for months now in Vancouver and some are being to reopen. Many will have been forced to close their doors for ever because of the financial fallout from Covid-19.

## **Chapter Six: How COVID-19 Came to Canada**

Covid-19 began its migration across Canada in the middle of the winter. Day one for the Pandemic's inexorable climb in numbers in Canada was on or about the 19<sup>th</sup> of February 2020, which was several months after Covid-19 started to appear in great numbers elsewhere. As early as December 2019 was around the time I started to provide advice to the Government of Canada about this COVID-19.

One of the things in the news at the time was the expatriate Canadians in China and in particular Hubei Province and Wuhan City in China. By early December 2019 Wuhan City had been declared the epicenter of the Covid-19 outbreak in China.

There were several hundred Canadians who were visiting or working in Hubei Province and Wuhan City at or near the epicenter at the time. The question was, what should be done for these expats or visiting Chinese. I made the recommendation to ask them to stay in place and for the Canadian Government to make arrangements to provide what they needed through deliveries of care packages and other provisions. I also made the recommendation to look at shutting down air traffic into Canada from major travels nodes, including nodes from Europe.

It was evident to me at even this early point in the crisis that things would get much worse before they would become better and that it was necessary to deal with issues of clustering and of mobility. In the modern age, with air traffic being universal and easy to accomplish that a virus like Covid-19 would quickly spread because of air traffic. And indeed this is what happened.

The first confirmed cases of Covid-19 were brought into Canada by air travelers into Canada from abroad. The first confirmed cases came not from points West from China, they came from points East, Europe and Iran.

At the time the Canadian Government made an error that in hind sight appears understandable. They became fixated on the possibility that air travelers from China would bring the Covid-19 virus into Canada. It is understandable because a city in China, Wuhan, was the declared epicenter of the pandemic.

**Many of the confirmed Covid-19 cases into Canada arrived with air travelers from Europe and not from China.**

But in hind sight I do not understand why it was not evident to the Government of Canada the unique role that the *Wuhan Military Games* may have played in inadvertently spreading the Covid-19 virus to other regions of the world like Europe starting as early as October 2019.

As a matter of public record it is necessary that a full accounting of the health history and the networking of all *Wuhan Military Games* participants be included in any public review of the Covid-19 pandemic. Here in Canada it is evident that the infection spread asymptotically through a statistically significant numbers of Canadian Armed Forces Personnel, including some who later assisted in rather unique Covid-19 relief efforts in Central Canada.

### **Chapter Seven: Lost from Us Forever ... but not Forgotten**

Over the past few months I have lost touch with an elderly gentleman who was in his eighties. We would from time to time happen upon each other waiting for a bus or would sit for coffee some Saturday morning at the local

market. He is a man who enjoyed sharing his interesting life stories with others. I suspect he now to is counted among the sad vital statistics of this Pandemic.

Gary MaCrae grew up in Victoria, BC and went down to San Francisco to go to art school. He had been a friend and was mentored by Frank Lloyd Wright. Along the way he crossed paths with the likes of beatniks Jack Kerouac (the author of *On the Road*), and the infamous Paddy O. Sullivan (if you don't know who this is I will let you find out for yourself) and unique characters like Count Michael von Meyer who was chased out of his estate home in St. Petersburg by the Bolsheviks in 1919 and clear across Russia on the trans-Siberian railroad tumbling first into the opium dens of 1930's Shanghai, buying his way out of Soviet Russia and into a artistic life in San Francisco ...a voyage through life paid for by his unique collection of Fabergé eggs, diamond jewelry and gold bric-a-brac.

If Gary MaCrae has been lost from us forever, at the very least he should not be forgotten. Here is a short story titled *Roses from Mexico City* that he submitted that was published in a fall 2019 edition of *Pen & Pencil Magazine*.

### **Roses of Mexico City by Gary McCrae**

During the early 1960's, this city the ancient capital of Mexico was in the throes of expansion. A population of eight million destined to overflow to 24 million by the mid-1990's.

The metro is built upon the old city of the Aztecs – a very slow process for artifacts – whole palaces and ancient temples are being unearthed which adds to the archeology of this magnificent and intriguing city.

Over the foundation of the largest Aztec pyramids had been built the grand Roman Catholic Cathedral on the plaza known as the Zócalo. This area was also bordered by the Presidential palace – the Municipal Council and the balconied town houses of the Colonial aristocracy. Southeast of this great plaza and behind this immediate area lay the huge wholesale market place *La Merced*, where fresh vegetables and flowers were brought in from the vast countryside of Mexico.

This large metropolis now known as Mexico City had since 500 A.D. been known as Teotihuacán, and then had a population of 100,000 people sprawled over twelve square kilometers, an area even larger than Imperial Rome.

The Toltecs took over from the Teotihuacáns, followed by the Tepanecas and it was they who allowed the Aztecs that had migrated down from the north to settle in what is now known as the Chapultepec district. This district of Mexico City is now situated at the end of the Reform boulevard situated down from the Alameda.

From this area they had been subdued and then removed by a neighboring tribe. The Aztecs fled to an island south called Tenochtitlan and their



settlement there in 1325 is now considered the official founding date for Mexico City. Eventually the Aztecs tied this island with an irrigation canal back to the district originally settled in Chapultepec.

My first introduction to this ancient city was by plane on an early January evening with a myriad of sparkling lights below. Upon landing we were driven through the teeming streets of Mexico City with vibrant humanity overflowing from all around. Ensconced at the *El Presidente* luxury hotel on the Alameda with a Diego Rivera mural overlooking the main lobby, this was an ideal place to set out, explore and discover this tantalizing Colonial city.

First on the agenda, which was the reason that drew me first to visit Mexico City, was a visit to the University of Mexico City. A few years earlier a wonderful offer had come my way which encompassed sending me to University for extended study of the history and arts for this area of the Universe. This offer was one I had never taken up and I was now anxious to visit and cover the campus. I had recently graduated from the world famous *Rudolph Schaeffer School of Color* in San Francisco and the recently attained knowledge would open up new vistas for me.

A few days later after my arrival and a visit to the grand floating gardens south of the city left over from the ancient Aztec civilization, I acquired from the hotel directions for going out to the University. This had sounded all very easy when the hotel had directed me to stand along the Alameda and step on a bus which would take me directly to the University. Upon

standing for half an hour, I realized that all the buses coming I could not differentiate one from the next on the arrival of the continuing buses.

Hearing a young couple conversing in English, I stepped over and enquired if they could help me on which specific bus I should get on, but they were no help to me, as they were not familiar with the local numbered buses. Whereupon I saw a bus coming which seemed like the one I had been waiting for. As I readied myself for boarding I felt someone tap me on the shoulder and heard a voice saying – ‘excuse me Sénor, this is your bus to the University.’ Looking around I saw a lovely Senorita with extremely large dark eyes milling at me. I thanked her and proceeded to board the bus and immediately realized I could not figure out how much the fare would be. Instantly money was put in front of me, from behind me, and the same voice saying ‘*it was all taken care of Sénor.*’

The same Senorita was smiling beside me and I wished to immediately reimburse her, but she wouldn’t take my money.

This was my introduction to Nora, for it was her way of getting to know me, and so we proceeded to sit and talk and the lengthy way out to the University of Mexico. This young lady had studied at the University’s school of languages and was an interpreter at the Hotel Alameda owned and operated by the Westin Hotel chain. She spoke fluent English and this gave her an excellent opportunity to offer me a sightseeing synopsis, when we arrived at the University. Of course I accepted and we had a most enjoyable afternoon going back and forth on the campus; admiring the grand mosaics on the tall

towers and the lower buildings. It then became time for me to return downtown and she also decided to ride back downtown having long forgotten the reason why she to come out originally to the University. So we had another good visit to the old city near the old Presidential Palace and to show her my appreciation I invited her, and her sister (as chaperone) to join me that same evening for dinner. My invitation was accepted and we would meet at my hotel, which was conveniently situated.

In those years my wardrobe consisted of some beautiful and handsome suits which had been custom made for me in San Francisco (I should perhaps tell you I had bright red hair at the time). For that evening, I selected one of them in dark midnight blue, in beautiful fine wool serge bordering on cashmere; a perfect suit for dining out late evening in Mexico City. When the two sisters arrived they were both dressed elegantly. Nora herself had on a beautiful wool evening suit in deep grey trimmed with the black silky hide of the unborn café covering the front of her jacket – softer and finer looking than any velvet fabric. This was still legal in Mexico for the mother cow had to be killed to obtain the unborn calf, and it is not legal to be used or sold in the United States. We discussed various places for dinner and they both hoped we could all go to the Hotel Isabella, which was the most elegant hotel and the place for the *haute culture* people of Mexico City to be seen in. I already having knowledge of this ... but this didn't appeal to me, so I asked the sisters if they knew of a real and authentic restaurant nearby which served the fine cuisine of Mexico. Immediately 'Si' was there response as their father had recently – within the last week in fact – taken them both there. But ... this would entail quite a drive to the distant outskirts of the

city ... which intrigued me even more. A sleek black limousine was summoned and we drove for miles from my hotel and arrived almost an hour later at the gates of what appeared to be a very elegant country club – perfect – with vast rolling manicured lawns amongst the trees and the grand restaurant was in a great sweep before our eyes – looking out over these great slabs of plate glass across the whole rambling colonial façade. While we arrived unannounced and had no reservations, the two sisters were acknowledged and we were ushered into a very large dining area filled with the most beautifully dressed people imaginable. Heavy linens were on each table, each touching the floor along with bright shiny silverware and heavy crystal. The waiters were all tuxedoed with none speaking English and the overlarge menus were all in Spanish – perfect!

I suggested to the two sisters that they make the menu selections for the three of us and to be sure and order plenty of whatever they wanted. ‘Si Señor – we will do just that!’ We chatted and eventually their food arrived which was placed in front of us and it looked like wonderful authentic Mexican cuisine. My plate was then brought to me and it consisted of a very huge beef steak along with a very large pile of French Fries, for they had picked out a dish that they thought would make a young *Gringo* happy. Gringo means ‘green’ in Spanish, referring to the color of American dollars. This is why Mexicans call Americans ‘gringo.’ I am actually a Canadian originally from Victoria, but had spent several years at art school in San Francisco. When it comes to Americans and Canadians, Mexicans don’t always make a distinction if you come from north of their border.

I really only picked at my food all the while stealing admiring glances at the two young women enjoying their meals. Hoping my disappointment did not show, I suggested they order several more Mexican dishes which we all three could share. This was done – one of the platters contained the most truly sumptuous chicken breast enchiladas I had ever tasted before or since that evening. Whole chicken breasts had been used inside, along with wonderful condiments for the stuffing. This was all perfect for me and it turned into a wonderful dinner of Mexican dishes. The dinner lasted several hours.

After dinner I suggested we could all go dancing. The sisters knew of a wonderful night club not too far from the restaurant, and so there we went. And authentic it was – another place for only very wealthy Mexican City citizens who really could afford and enjoy luxury. The club was huge, and along with Latin American music, there was a fabulous floor show. Across the full length of the stage was the largest xylophone I had ever seen stretching a good ten meters across with 20 to 25 musicians all playing on it at the same time – and what music it was. I can still hear it today in my memory; and what a good time dancing – to tangos, cha cha chas and rumbas – for the next three hours.

Now Mexico City at the time, (the early 1960's) did not have the great number of people it has today. It was a great deal less safe for foreigners to travel through than today. One did have to take into consideration ones' safety while moving about, especially if any distance was involved. Upon departing the night club that evening, the two sisters and I arranged for a cab

to pick us up and I had completely forgotten to request that the driver be able to speak English, which is very mandatory in any foreign city. We left the night club with the sisters giving the driver instructions in Spanish and of course we would drop them at home first, and then I would go on to my hotel downtown afterwards.

The cab drove for miles as to my great amazement we ascended up the wall of the great plateau driving ever upwards and steeper for some distance. Arriving at the top, the sight before us was astounding, for there on top of this great expanse the most futuristic city one could imagine appeared– all floodlit before our eyes – along with a full moon beaming across the whole mirage-like scene. Skyscrapers jutting across – bridges joining them like freeways – all laid out in great order and palatial form.

The sisters ordered the cab driver with directions to where they reside, and when we arrived there with polite thank yous and goodbyes took their leave ... and the cab proceeded on ....Almost immediately it came over me a great fear that this driver did not possibly speak fluent English and we were in the middle of nowhere ... for within blocks we started to descend the plateau and leave the great vision behind us and we were in total darkness once again.

Almost with panic over me, I asked the driver if he spoke English with no response and continued in his slow and meticulous way. Nothing could be done but to hope he would drive me directly to my hotel for we were now in total darkness, with nothing but shrubs and trees on both sides of us.

Suddenly out of the blue he started talking perfect English but not what I wanted to hear for he was marketing a lady of the night to me in most uncertain terms: the most beautiful girl in all of Mexico City for forty dollars and another one for much less, but she wasn't so pretty. My response was a sharp 'No!' which made him persist even harder, in fact so extremely persistent to where we were shouting at each – me yelling to be taken home immediately. At this point I was becoming fearful for I was dressed far too luxurious to be in such a situation.

We arrived at the bottom of the plateau in total darkness. Winding along a roadway we all of a sudden made an abrupt right angle turn in to an extended alley that appeared out of nowhere like it had risen out of the Earth. And ... it might have come up out of hell ... for there before me was a sight not to be believed.

The alley before me was lit with overhead lights which made it as bright as from the midday sun. It was here that I was looking at the night-world and a large portion of the netherworld of Mexico City. The length of three city blocks were teeming with people, filling that alley from wall to wall. As the limousine taxis wound its way t less than a snail's pace in this mob, they separated only enough to let the cab through. The whole scene before me was as though it had been lifted out from the filmmaker "Fellini" and his infamous Italian movies. The most grotesque faces imaginable were passing my car continuously. Some were looking down in at me with faces pressed against the window peering right at me ...They all looked liked drugged zombies and no doubt were ... nothing in hell could ever possibly look

worse. What a horror and bad nightmare for me and I was convinced the cab driver was taking me where he wanted to be in the beginning and I would have no say when presented to whatever underworld he wished to expose me to. These were, of course, all the night people of Mexico City, but it was the grotesque features on their faces that left the indelible mark on my memory. It seemed like an eternity to slowly wind our way through this teeming mass of sub-humans, all amassed in one alley. But suddenly we were out of it as quickly as we had come in to it and to my relief it was still dark but we were out of the alley! Ten minutes later we turned another abrupt corner and my hotel loomed up from the darkness. I was extremely angry – the cab driver had put me through an unnecessary ordeal, and as I was proceeding up the steps of my hotel, and I looked back he had the nerve to shout from his window – “Ah Séñor, why were you so afraid – I got you safely home.”

The following day a call came to my suite from Nora as they had enjoyed so much the evening before and would I be able to accept an invitation to their home for dinner the following evening. It did race through my mind about a book my Mother had read me one summer when I was home. It covered Mexico City families and how they bring to their homes unsuspecting suitors for their marriageable daughters, and this could be the stage for a surprise wedding which they spring on them. Pushing these thoughts aside with the idea that I was old enough by now to handle such a situation and “yes, I could come” – the limousine would be dispatched to pick me up at my hotel at seven in the evening. Now mother had always instructed me to always take along a gift to the hostess, and this would be what I would do.



Enquiring at the hotel front desk where to purchase flowers, they directed me over to the great flower market *La Merced*, many blocks directly behind the hotel. Finding the market I was flabbergasted to see the acreage which covered every type of flower, including exotic blooms from the furthest jungles over far reaching corners of the country. One of the first stalls I encountered had the most magnificent long stemmed roses, and this I kept in mind as I wound through the many faceted stalls all the more wonderful than the last. This took several hours looking at it and admiring the most colorful and exotic blooms – orchids upon orchids – bromeliads all in the lushest colors, That I had ever encountered, but was drawn back like a magnet to those beautiful roses with stems up to four or five feet long.

Finding myself back at the rose stand, the old Mexican lady who owned it was busy with a number of different customers. While waiting I began wondering what the connotation of roses might be in a foreign country which I was not all that familiar with. Stepping over I asked a beautifully dressed lady in a very handsomely tailored camel hair suit about taking some roses to a hostess. ‘Perfect,’ she declared, so it was set – roses it would be – I would but a few of the wonderful magenta and orange pink ones which were absolutely breathtaking. Not figuring out the exchange and when the old lady was free, I stepped over and let her know I would but ten dollar American worth. Calling a grandson over to help her, they began to bring over bunches of roses much to their delight and the pile grew to around the height of my shoulders. This was shocking to me, but hadn’t realized what ten dollars could but at the time and at the same time I didn’t have the heart to disappoint the old lady by telling her that I couldn’t take all of them. But

how would I get them back to the hotel? This the old lady solved easily by calling in five more grandsons to come and carry them, myself included, piled high with roses. The seven of us wound our way back to my hotel. What a sight it must have presented, not only many blocks back, but coming into the hotel lobby with such a mass of gorgeous roses. I had already decided I would request the hotel if they could hold them in cold storage for me until I would let them know I what I would do with them, for no way could these all be taken for a hostess of a dinner party.

Yes they would hold them for me until I would give them further instructions for their disposition. Arriving back to my suite, the telephone was ringing and on the other end was Nora with news of a change of plans. Her father was going to take us all for dinner to *el Villa Fontana* – one of the most outstanding restaurants in the city, as I had already known about and heard about this restaurant sometime before. This change of plans would be fine, for dining there would be a very rare experience, although I was somewhat disappointed to not have dinner in a Mexico City home. In the mean time my decision was just to leave the flowers with the hotel for now, and after everything was over I would give them instructions to perhaps place the rose in vases throughout the lobby.

During my stay in the hotel I made friends with an elderly, well travelled, couple from Oakland California who were somewhat perturbed hearing of these new plans, with young and impressionable me being the centre point of such an elaborate meeting. They requested that I meet them early in the hotel bar for cocktails at their invitation. I sensed they were anxious with

worry in their voices to meet and observe Nora and her family. They too heard stories of *matrimonial entrapment*. They were a darling couple – very elegant and were like a very fine ersatz grandmother and grandfather to me.

That evening we gathered for cocktails – dry Manhattan Martinis – at the end of the lobby, far away from the entrance. Together we were all seated where we could observe Nora's arrival. After our second cocktail what a happy time we were having when I saw Nora arrive at the front entrance of the hotel on the arm of her aristocratic father. And what an entrance it was. It stopped all traffic in that huge lobby. I waved and with a smile Nora spotted me. All eyes were upon this majestic pair coming across the floor towards us. She was dressed like a movie star, in a long black dress topped by a silk magenta opera cape flowing and billowing out to the floor with a slight train in the cape following in her footsteps. Her father was not exceptionally tall, but his regal bearing with an immaculate custom evening suit, complete with a black silk bowtie, carrying a beautiful golden headed cane topped the picture off like something out of a fairy tale.

They arrived over at where the three of us were sitting, chatting and I was busy introducing my friends all around when to my utter amazement I looked up and it was appearing like a mountain and a mirage moving over from the front desk. With a second look I realized that the head counterman had taken it upon himself and decided of course these were who the roses were for and sent out six bellhops to carry them over and present them with great flourish to Nora. She was overwhelmed. Even her staid father staggered on his cane at sight a sight and no one was more staggered than I,

and the first thing that came blurting from out of my mouth was “these are for your mother.”

Nora smiled when I said this for she knew in her heart perhaps why I had said this. Nora’s father, Mr. Riese, warmly thanked me for the roses. I took a liking to Nora’s father immediately for it was very obvious that he was cultured and that he had old family connections to this ancient and sophisticated City. While we said our goodbyes to the Oakland couple, the flowers eventually were all loaded into the limousine. Then Nora her father and I – barely finding room in the limousine – were now on our unbelievable ride to *el Villa Fontana* on the regal stretch of Reform Boulevard. We were absolutely engulfed in these magnificent roses – in the fact the car was so packed with these beautiful blossoms that many were hanging out the open windows. People stopped in the street to watch us pass.

Our arrival at the restaurant caused a flurry. Exactly as the lobby of the El Presidente Hotel, the whole *el Villa Fontana* restaurant came to a complete standstill on our being led through the lobby and up the tiers of banquette seats to be seated right in the middle of the establishment – with all eyes upon us! In her arms Nora carried a few dozen of the roses. I suspect all eyes were on her and her alone, or perhaps her and her father. I sensed I was hardly noticed, except for perhaps my red hair.

Mon Dieu ... what an evening ... and it had just begun.

Now *el Villa Fontana* was famous not only in Mexico City, but the whole wide world over. The outstanding features beyond their superb cuisine was the strolling violinists of which each group consisted of approximately forty men playing the most romantic and beseeching music. Some of the music they played was Spanish, some Hungarian gypsy and some dreamy classical. Their musical reputation preceded them, and I had heard of their talents long before while I was in school in San Francisco.

While our waiter welcomed us to the restaurant and made arrangements to place Nora's roses in a silver vase on a small table, the musicians strolled over to serenade us. Such haunting music. I stole a glance around me. This restaurant was massive in size with extremely large isles to accommodate these groups of musicians strolling through and stopping to play at certain tables.

Out of the corner of my eye I could see that Nora's father was observing me closely, and that Nora was in turn observing her father. There was a triangle of sorts around the table. I should perhaps tell you that Mr. Riese either could not speak English or decided he would not. Nora did the interpretation and translation for us both. Besides I knew that people of consequence in Mexico know to learn and practice their English. I suspected at the very least Nora's father could understand English, so I knew to be guarded in what I would say to Nora. How did I know this? Well, it was in the lobby of the hotel when he father asked of me whether I was gringo ... and he reacted ever so slightly – before Nora could translate for him – when I said “no I come from Canada.”

The musicians played a short introductory set for us and then moved on and the instant they were out of ear shot, and before we three could say anything the waiter reappeared carrying the grand leather bound menus. Once again they were all in Spanish so once again I deferred to Nora and her judgment. When I did this Nora's father did the same, which I sensed surprised Nora. I could see her father being so aristocratic as to not let his two daughters make any decisions for themselves. Nora beamed with her culinary responsibility.

I decided to test this hypothesis and asked Nora how her sister was today. Nora looked up with big eyes, then toyed with the gold chain and cross around her neck before saying, "she wanted to come too ... but papa thought four of us here for dinner would be a bit of a spectacle ..." Then dutifully she turned and Nora translated what she had just said to me to her father. Her father said one word 'extravaganza ...' and smiled over at me. Then Nora turned back to me and re-spoke the phrase "papa thought the four of us here for dinner would be a bit of a extravaganza ..." I knew now it was best I not to tip the triangle.

The waiter returned and the order was given and then from almost behind the waiter – as if he was his shadow – the sommelier appeared, produced three wine menus for us and we set off to make the wine selection. Nora's father turned to his daughter and in Spanish said one word, and I knew what that word meant ... 'Champagne?' Nora turned to me and asked me "would you like Champagne with our dinner?"

“Champagne was a bit sweet for my taste for the main course of a meal ...”  
Nora turned to her father and explained. He closed his wine menu then he waved his hand at me and said something in Spanish.

“My father wonders if you can select the wine for our dinner.”

There’s a bear trap if I ever heard one. Choose a fine wine, but not an expensive one! Not a middling one but nearer the top end ... I looked down at the jumble of Spanish words, then before I got lost in them a brilliant thought came to mind. I looked up and over at her and asked Nora “what have you ordered for us for dinner.” As she explained in English I noticed the sommelier seemed uninterested. I was hoping he could understand English – but it was evident he couldn’t. I had hoped to draw the sommelier into the decision making process, but I guess it was left to Nora and I to sort this out. She was game and so we discussed the dishes for a few moments then I asked her to translate for the sommelier. Without saying a word he pointed at a wine on the list. To my great relief it was neither inexpensive nor expensive. It was a Spanish wine I was familiar with. I nodded my head and said “si.” The sommelier smiled his approval, as did Nora’s father and collected up two of the three menus. Diplomatically leaving one at Mr. Riese’s elbow. I guess the Champagne might come later. I had tipped-toed around that bear trap!

Then started the twenty questions ... How we had met ? – as if he didn’t already know for he probably had already given his daughter the ‘third degree’ – but I guess wanted Mr. Riese wanted to hear it in my own words.

I was careful not to mention Nora's boldness, nor imply that I was in active search for female company here in Mexico City.

He asked me what I did ... then I sort of tripped up. I mentioned I had just finished art school in San Francisco ...

“Artista?” The look of surprise on Mr. Riese's face brought a look of embarrassment to Nora's face. I knew she knew but I immediately suspected that she had not told her father this ... Mr. Riese glared at Nora with the consternation of father thinking ‘over my dead body ...’

This brought a mix of feelings to my heart. On the one hand I was indignant that being an artist was considered so lowly by Nora's father, yet I also knew that I would not be invited to their home for a feast – wedding. I tried to keep a straight face but I suspect a bit of anguish showed on my face for Nora knew to ask “are you ok?” She again toyed with her necklace as she waited for my answer.

It was a sort of tell – her and her necklace. I smiled at her and simply said “art is what I seem to be best at ...” She turned to her father and translated but once again I sensed he understood English for he immediately began to talk about the great artists of Mexico and Spain. It only took a few seconds for me to see that Nora was going to be fine (she stopped toying with her necklace) and while Mr. Riese talked about Valázquez and Goya I knew he was in his element. He made no mention of the modern Spanish artists like Picasso or Dali. It was if he was reciting a university lecture he once took in



Spanish Art History. I could tell Nora had heard this lecture before for she was quite bored.

Perhaps the talk needed some living up? I was about to mention the wonderful murals I had seen at the University when out of the corner of my eye I saw Nora raise her hand to her necklace. Both her father and I turned to her and we could both see the nervousness in her eyes. This was the dramatic moment of our evening! Nora sensed the danger. So I decided to forgo mention of the murals and started to talk about some of the religious Spanish religious icons we had studied at art school. A sincere look of relief passed over Nora's face.

I guess if I had mentioned the Diego murals I would be a rebel amongst the aristocratic and this would have ruined the ambience of our evening. Just as I was about to exhaust my limited knowledge of Spanish religious icons our meal arrived to save us from our awkwardness.

As the meal progressed I sensed a gathering seriousness in the tone of Mr. Riese's conversation with his daughter. The conversation was still through Nora's interpretation. Nora's father seemed very concerned with her about something serious and finally she turned to me and said her father was being insistent that I be told that her mother was not alive and he felt I should be told this as I had said that this was who the roses were for. Her eyes went stern for a brief second and I had to think what it was she was trying to tell me. The stern look on her father's face told me that I needed to act ever so carefully.

“Do you like the roses?” I asked her.

“I do ... very much ... but my father says he would rather see they go to a favorite aunt of mine ...” With those words I knew with certainty I would never be invited to a visit to their home. Again almost magically the next course of our meal arrived.

Nora in a coquette dig at perhaps the two men at her elbows had ordered me Oysters Rockefeller. Arranged on a large crystal platter set in shaved ice on an even larger sterling silver charger, were two dozen grand oysters.

She looked up at me and asked “Do you like oysters ... or would you prefer snails?” She was a clever one, for just a few weeks before there had been a movie review article about a scene in the feature film Spartacus where a slave (Tony Curtis) asks his Roman Master whether he preferred oysters to snails ...

I grinned knowingly at her. “I love eating oysters ... and never touch snails.”

He father did not ask Nora what we had just said, so I just set upon the plate. The huge oysters were done in the traditional way of fresh spinach and cheese au gratin broiled over them. I ate one. It was the best oyster I had ever tasted and fresher than one could imagine. I offered Nora and her father to taste several of them along with what they she had ordered for

themselves. Mr. Riese declined but Nora enthusiastically said she would. “I have never tasted oysters before.” Instead of daintily lifting the oyster out of its shell with a spoon she lifted the entire oyster to her lips and slurped it down, leaving a little drop of juice on her chin. She caught it with her hand before the drop fell on her magnificent dress. Her father said nothing but gave her a stern look of disapproval. In her rebellious mood she asked me for another. Nora’s father shook his head slightly but all I could think of doing was shrug my shoulders. Nora enjoyed her second more than her first. I sensed she hoped I would offer her a third – but we had tempted fate twice already. A third time would be profoundly unlucky.

The wine matched their dishes but it did not match the oysters so I left my glass untouched and asked for mineral water instead. Sensing this mismatch Mr. Riese ordered a bottle of Spanish sparkling white wine – champagne of sorts – the likes of which turned out to be a perfect match to the Oysters Rockefeller. Nora took a glass as well but Mr. Riese declined the pour by placing his hand over his glass and sternly warning the sommelier off with a few words in Spanish. The sommelier seemed a bit offended but set the half finished bottle between Nora and I into a large sterling silver cooler packed in ice. From time to time the sommelier took to stopping by and topping up our glasses. My glass was topped but once while Nora’s was topped three times.

Then we dined leisurely with very few words shared. I knew that cultured dining in the Spanish speaking world was expected to last two or three hours. While we ate Mr. Riese went silent and all but left Nora and I to talk

between ourselves. It was at that point that I knew Nora's father understood English, for Nora was careful with what she said to me, and even how she said it, so we talked about what seemed like trivialities to me.

Nora asked me about my home and upbringing in Victoria and my time at the *Rudolph Schaeffer School of Color* in San Francisco. I in turn asked her about her growing up. And so a pleasant time was passed dining and chatting. No mention was made about her father and what he did and about her family, and her family fortune and the like. While I came from a well-to-do family, I had made sure I had avoiding mentioning anything too specific about my family and its fortune.

When the main dinner was over and before the dessert arrived, Nora excused herself to the powder room and this left me all alone with her father. Immediately the very cultured and well-mannered gentleman began talking to me in impeccable English with no trace of a Spanish accent. The fact that he spoke without an accent and impeccably was very profound, along with being utterly amazing!

I realized, until he had decided that he liked me, he would not converse with me directly. But now this point had arrived, and we had a very animated conversation. He told me that as a young man he had lived in California and had gone there from Mexico City to go to the University and had worked in *el Etats Unitas* for ten years before returning home where he had lived ever since. He expressed how much he liked me and the feeling was, of course, mutual. He offered me an invitation that upon a future return to Mexico

City, as his guest he would take me and his two daughters on a tour through Mexico starting at Toas the old silver capital and continuing through the country for six weeks; staying, as he insisted, at the most luxurious accommodations available. I said that I was honored and would love to take this trip with him and his family, whereupon Nora returned to our table with a look of astonishment. She was surprised that her father and I had hit it off so well – he was conversing in English with me and she was delighted.

After a very animate and lively dessert we took our leave of this very renowned restaurant. As we exited I cast one last glance from the foyer over this dream world and the elegant atmosphere cascading from the tiered baquettes – tuxedoed waiters – bright silver – tinkling crystal- superb music – soft illumination – I knew instantly that this had been an evening of privilege. Collecting Nora's dozens of roses we made our grand exit to the waiting limousine which whisked us back along Reforma – a full moon engulfing the sparkling city, with roses filling the car with their aroma – back to my hotel where I would take leave in the morning for many more weeks of my travel – both by air and by ship – before I would once again return home. It was with some sadness that I told Nora that I would be leaving Mexico City the following afternoon.

Early the following morning the sky was bright with sunshine and crisp with January air. I prepared to take my leave from this most colorful cosmopolitan city. As I stood waiting for a taxi to take me to the airport suddenly out of the crisp morning appeared Nora with some small keep-sake gifts for me. She was sad to see me go and asked me to write her and to

come visit her again ‘in the not too distant future.’ It was awkward for me in that I hardly knew the young lady and well, I had obligations elsewhere, including back in San Francisco. The taxis arrived and we took our leave, shaking hands. One of the souvenirs Nora gave me was a small Spanish translation book she once used which when I opened later at the airport revealed some of the rose petals from the night before, carefully pressed between several of the book leaves.

Weeks later, after many thousands of miles of travel, I arrived back in San Francisco in the grand luxury P & O ocean liner coming through the Panama Canal. Immediately when I arrived at my apartment the doorman told me of the many telephone calls he had been receiving from Mexico City. Hardly after I set foot in my apartment that the telephone rang. It was Nora calling to inquire about my trip and welfare. In a few days I started to turn them down for they had become collect calls on my telephone. Finally, some weeks later, a short note arrived in the mail from Mexico City informing me that Nora and her father had been trying to get in touch with me to invite me to come to a grand fiesta which was to be held at her aunt’s ranch (that same aunt who got all the roses) near El Paso Texas. This was to be a fourteen day celebration – which I knew very often evolved into a wedding celebration with the unsuspecting groom becoming the main object of hundreds of celebrants who congregated from all over the world for the occasion.

Many years later I attended an evening special celebration in the very grand gothic Grace Cathedral on Nob Hill in San Francisco. Part way through the

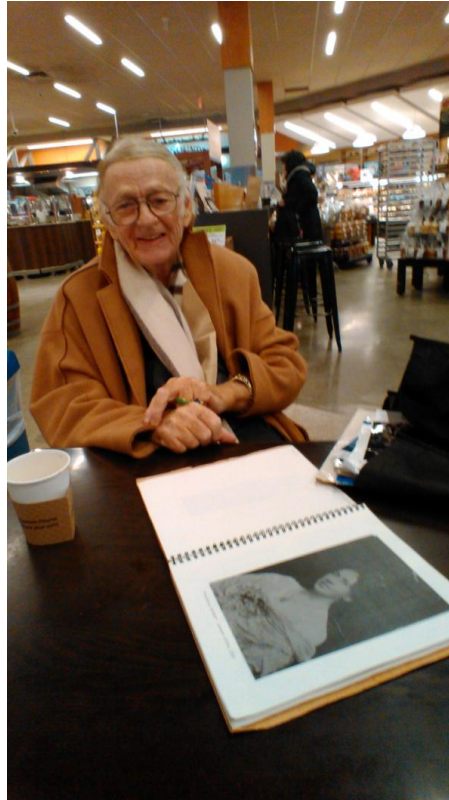
service I glanced across the aisle and there seated to the left of me was an exact replica of the young Nora from many years before. It was even necessary for me to shake my head to look again, and be able to comprehend the vision before me.

At the end of the service I maneuvered to the beautiful young lady and the dark handsome fellow at her side. As we came through the grand and open magnificent bronze doors depicting the Gates of Paradise a beautiful full moon was bathing the whole top of Nob Hill in a glittering cover of radiance.

Striking up a conversation with the couple I discovered they were in San Francisco on their honeymoon and were staying at the old and very elegant Fairmont hotel just a block away. We talked about their visit to my city and how enthralled they were both to be here. As we arrived at the grand portico of their hotel I summoned the courage to ask the young lady what her mother's name was – Nora was the reply – and I assured her that she must and I was sure her mother also must be a beautiful lady. “Si Señor” was the reply. ‘My mother is the most gracious and famous hostess of all Mexico City.’ Then the lovely couple turned and disappeared into the mist as they entered their hotel, and their future destiny which lay before them.

Out of mist of the night appeared the whole evening from thirty years before at *el Villa Fontana*. Was it a pang of guilt, or perhaps nostalgia? Was it the magic emanating from the moonlight – the mist – or combination of both? There before my eyes appeared Nora and her father, the grand restaurant, the

oysters, the violinists with their beautiful and enchanting music, Nora in her grand majestic silk opera cape with her gracious father with his gold handled cane and their stately grace – and both of them giving me a wonderful, vibrant smile.



**Mr. Gary MacRae, (Dec. 2019)**

## **Chapter Eight: COVID-19 and the Question of Gender**

The first few official deaths in early 2020 due to Covid-19 here in Canada occurred mere minutes away from where I live. They were an unfortunate couple in an old folk's home whose daughter came to visit them immediately upon her return from a cruise vacation. Within hours they had



trouble breathing and within days they had died, but not before the covid-19 virus was passed throughout that old folk's home. Within weeks a dozen elderly men and a few women were dead there.

The virus soon spread to several other old folk's homes when part time workers moved about, some working in the kitchens preparing food, who were working a few hours each day at one home and then a few hours the same day at another. This would turn out to be one of the clustering effects that would be seen throughout much of Canada – the clustering at old folk's home (also known as nursing homes) where the elderly and infirmed live under medical care. This clustering at old folk's home would be the epicenter of much of the mortality due to the Covid-19 in Canada.

Canada's two biggest provinces, Quebec and Ontario which constitutes half of the population of Canada, saw severe outbreaks in April and May 2020 when a wave of infections swept through hundreds of old folk's, claiming some 7,000 dead in eight weeks, about 80% of the Canada's 9,000 deaths to date. The infectious wave had crested before the medical officials realized what was happening. They should have learned from what went on at several old folk's homes here in Vancouver six weeks earlier. They should have also understood this might happen with Covid-19 for this is what happened in Canada during the *Hong Kong Flu* pandemic in 1968.

I use the term *official* here because it appears the first *unofficial* death may have occurred much earlier on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019 when an elderly curmudgeon of a man died after bending an elbow (bending an elbow is an

euphemism for drinking ... the man was a known alcoholic) at the local Legion and made his way home on the bus. He spent several hours each day at the Legion, even though he had never served the Crown or the Parliament and People of Canada a single day in his life.

He was a notorious man for his indifference towards other – I had witnessed a number of times when he would push past people to rush on the bus, or sit at the front where infirmed people should be sitting, forcing them to ‘move on’ to the back of the bus. I went so far as to ask the mayor to get the transit police to check his misbehavior.

And then there was the fact he rarely paid his fare when he took the bus. “I am a good friend of the mayor” he would say straight to the face of the bus drivers after hopping aboard the bus without paying his fare. And then would gleefully say again to the bus driver how he ‘would pour himself a good stiff drink’, as he hopped off the bus – doing this to rub his free ride in the face of the driver.

On the day he passed away he was on his way home after the Legion had closed that Saturday evening and the bus driver noted how “blue” his skin color was and encouraged him to immediately go to Lions Gate Hospital.

But instead the old curmudgeon went home and sat in his lazy boy lounge chair and expired of respiratory failure. The following morning one of his friends stopped by his place to deliver him a Christmas time care package box of groceries. When he did not answer his door they got the manager to

open his apartment and found him blue with death. He should have listened to the bus driver and gone to the hospital. But you see he had contempt for others ...

I mention his demise because there is a link to something I had mentioned earlier in this book. Can you spot the link? What function does the Legion serve, to provide solace to those who have served the Crown or the Parliament and the People of Canada. This is where active and retired members of the Canadian Armed Forces go to relax.

It would be interesting to connect the dots ... those Canadian servicemen who had attended and participated in the *Wuhan Military Games* in October 2019 and how the early spread in the period October 2019 to say February 2020 of Covid-19 may have occurred across Canada. Perhaps this correlation has been done? The thing is that soldiers are by their very nature healthy individuals and may be asymptotic carriers of Covid-19. As I have mentioned, the virus has also mutated somewhat since October 2019. I believe it would be in the public interest of Canada and its NATO allies to undertake an epidemiological study of this matter.

The *Wuhan Military Games* ran from October 18 to 27 in Wuhan, Hubei Province in China. Some 9,300 military personnel from 100 countries participated in 27 sports events. There were over 100 participants from Canada, and some 1600 athletes from Europe. The countries most affected by Covid-19 had high proportions of athletes among the 1600. There were

news reports soon after the athletes returned how some had taken ill while in Wuhan.

The key to understanding the spread of a disease includes clustering and mobility of carriers. This has been one of the difficult aspects of mapping out Covid-19. Here are several interesting correlations.

First, I have noticed that the European countries which did not send athletes to the *Wuhan Military Games* have had a lower mortality per million and infection per million rate than those countries who did send athletes to the event.

Second, the rapidity and manner by which the Covid-19 virus has spread over the past ten months cannot be accounted for merely by the random movement of civilian travelers using commercial air carrier routes. The spread has been for the most part asymptotic. Again this would point to healthy carriers who had at one time clustered and then moved to different points around the globe early on in the pandemic.

This point is of special note because this was one of the reasons why the *Spanish Flu* spread so rapidly and in such a widespread fashion. Soldiers returning from the Great War carried the Spanish Flu back home with them. I leave you to do your own research about this aspect of the pandemic of 1918 to 1920.

The third correlation I noted was the majority of the mortality was occurring among men. At the beginning of the pandemic in some countries the ratio was in some countries approaching 2 to 1 (that meant in a group of 30 victims, twenty were men and ten were women). In Canada at the beginning of 2020 the ratio was around 1.5 to 1. I pointed out to the Government of Canada that this correlation is of epidemiological significance. The Government of Canada tried to gender aggregate the data (throwing all the data together and mixing it up so that this correlation was hidden away), and then tried to emphasized that women had a slightly higher infection rate.

I put my foot down and said to the Government of Canada if they tried to end gender disaggregation to their data (to end the listing of mortality by gender) I would petition Her Majesty the Queen by way of the Governor General of Canada to require the Parliament to continue to gender disaggregate the data. I also clearly reminded them that the main issue is not the gender disparity of the infection (a difference that is less than the statistical uncertainty) but that it is the mortality data.

When I clearly got my scientific message across I then challenged the Government of Canada to affect an important change to the medical triage of elderly patients arriving at hospitals for Covid-19 care. If you are not familiar with the term medical triage let me explain it:

### **Medical Definition of triage**

1: the sorting of and allocation of treatment to patients and especially battle and disaster victims according to a system of priorities designed to maximize the number of survivors.

2: the sorting of patients (as in an emergency room) according to the urgency of their need for care

I recommended the medical officers who were overseeing Covid-19 care in Canada undertake the following assessment:

Say there are twelve elderly patients who arrive for medical care, all of which show the same symptoms – six patients are male and six are female.

In the normal course of gender aggregated care the twelve patients would be treated on an equitable basis.

I suggested a modified triage strategy - the six men be brought in for immediate intensive triage, which the six women would receive a less intensive triage. When this modified medical triage strategy was implemented, **not only did the mortality rate began to fall in Canada, so did the gender disparity, which now sits at 1.1 to 1.**

If you go to websites like [Globalhealth5050.org](https://www.globalhealth5050.org) and search out the Covid-19 sex disaggregated-data-tracker you will see a listing and notice the gender disparity.

Now some non-scientists have tried to pass this matter off as insignificant, or due to “lifestyle decisions”. However, their politically motivated comments have struck me as some of the most disturbing prejudices that have found their way into print during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In actual fact the gender disparity may be a feature of the virus itself and not a life style matter at all. Some medical researchers have noted this in their research and one shall we say “off the wall treatment suggestion is to give men suffering from Covid-19 massive doses of estrogen to see how this might affect the evolution of the disease.

I smile when I think of this for anyone who knows anything about the aging of men, that they have ever diminishing levels of testosterone which means the minor sex hormone in their body estrogen (yes men do have estrogen in their bodies) cause them to lose hair and even to grow breasts.

In actual fact, from puberty onwards estradiol, the dominant form of estrogen, plays a critical role in male sexuality. Estradiol in men is essential for modulating libido, erectile function, and spermatogenesis, just as testosterone in women helps to drive their sexuality as well. I leave you to research this on your own time.

It is not perhaps the sex hormones that are of central important here when it comes to Covid-19 but the fact that men and women have different immune systems. This was pointed out in some scientific papers by a group of French Researchers in Paris. This differences to the male and female

immune systems results in differences in how men and women react to physical traumas like lung infection (e.g pneumonia) and renal failure. When I made my recommendations about the modified medical triage to the Canadian Government I passed this information about the differences to the male and female immune systems along as well.

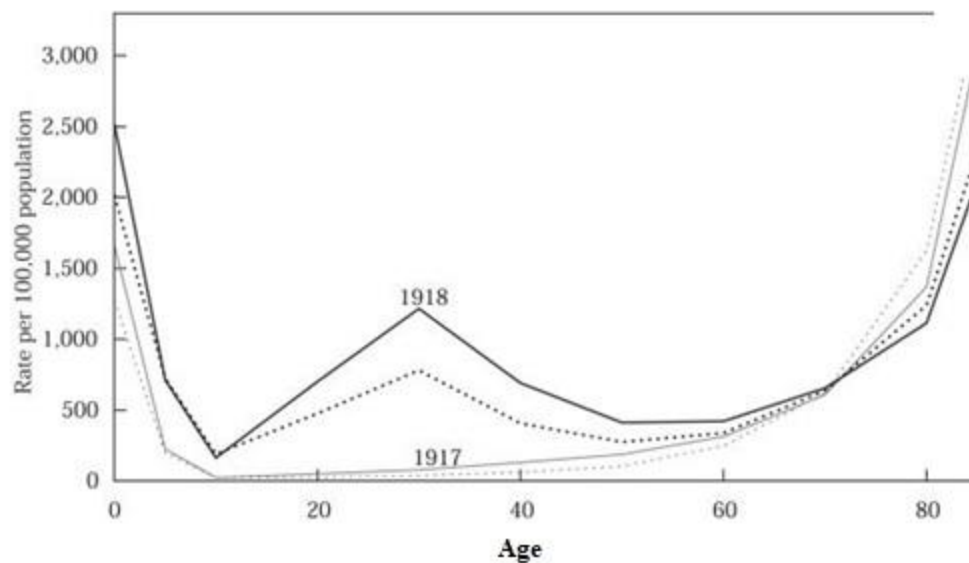
You may smile to note I passed along these science-based recommendations to our English cousins in London (the FCO) and in Washington (the State Department).

I have to ask this question ... but I don't really know how to ask it. To what extent did gender politics adversely affect the early efforts to treat for Covid-19 in Canada?

Once the Covid-19 is behind us it would be interesting to undertake a comparison of this pandemic to the Spanish Flu, the Asian Flu and the Hong Kong Flu.

Here, for instance, is the mortality as a function of age for the Spanish Flu taken from the paper (refer to: The 1918 Influenza Epidemic's Effects on Sex Differentials in Mortality in the United States, by Andrew Noymer and Michel Garenne, published in 2009 and available at [nih.gov/pmc/article/PMC 2740912](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/2740912/)).





**Fig.3: Mortality Rate during the Spanish Flu**

In 1918 the mortality due to influenza and pneumonia in the US was:

Gender	Mortality per 100,000
Male	672
Female	498

**Table 1: Mortality Rate 1918 (influenza and Pneumonia)**

As you can see in the *Spanish Flu* the mortality rate of males compared to females was markedly different: The ratio was nearly 1.4 times.

Overall, the death rate in the United States due to Spanish Flu in 1918 was 11,700 deaths per million. Presently the death rate due to Covid-19 in the United States is about 500 deaths per million (as of 30 August, 2020).

**In comparison terms the Spanish Flu death rate was 25 times that seen presently due to Covid-19 in the United States.**

During the *Asian Flu* and the *Hong Kong Flu* mortality rates were also significantly higher among men compared to women. The mortality rate during these two pandemics was also highest among people 65 years of age or older. During the *Hong Kong Flu* pandemic there was a secondary peak in mortality among young children, mostly young boys.

I nearly become one of the dead during the 1968 Hong Kong pandemic.

## **Chapter Nine: A Second Cold War?**

For many of us we have such an active and demanding work life that when a chance to stop and put up our feet comes along it is hard to decide what to do. Many millions have been confronted with this quandary, but not by choice but by misfortune. Forced closures and job loss has brought despair and unhappiness to countless people. It is hard to imagine how they have managed, or even whether they are managing at all.

For some, such as health care professionals, this pandemic has brought them added work. We are all thankful for their dedication and sacrifice. They have forgone their safety and their well-being through their service to others. Hardly a day passes without mentioned of their courage and stories about courageous doctors and nurses who have laid down their lives for others.

There are also stories of profound despair leading to health care professionals taking their own lives.

There is, of course, the sad story of the doctor in China who tried, early on, to valiantly warn the world about what was happening in Wuhan. He would be arrested and prevented from doing his job, and then he would die from the very disease he was warning the world about. There is a special place in heaven for this man and many others like him, and a dark place in hell for those who did not help him with his saintly task. Where is the humanity?

This pandemic has also brought added burden to countless others, from mothers who tend to their children, to workers in essential services such as public transport and the ambulance service, constabulary and all those who serve the Crown. In the Commonwealth and around the Free World we owe these countless millions for their silent dedication to the safety and well-being of others.

You notice that I mention the Free World, for my sense of things is that we are slipping into a second Cold War which may prove to be more challenging to the future of humanity than the Cold War that spanned the period 1947 to 1991. This pandemic may be the blind behind which *Real-Politik* is played out between superpowers.

In the first Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union (or between NATO and the Warsaw Pact .... whichever measure you decide to use) nuclear weapons were central to that Cold War. A Second imperative would

be the Space Race and the Race to the Moon that was suggested by President John F. Kennedy – a brilliant feat of peaceful Real-Politik that would lay the foundation to the peaceful resolution of the Cold War, that and the election of a Polish Cleric as Pope John Paul II.

In the Second Cold War which has already begun has five contending Superpowers (the US, Russia, China, India and the Europeans) it may very well be information and influence that is central to this twilight struggle. It is worth noting that three of those superpowers are economic powerhouses, while the two others have never fully achieved their economic potential. The Second Cold War may ultimately be a struggle between political philosophies – democracy and authoritarianism, not between armies and arms. I will share some more thoughts about this Second Cold War later in this book.

Before then let me start at a point and work outwards. I had to make some decisions early on in this pandemic so as to improve my chances of survival.

I myself work at several jobs. Having several things to keep me busy is necessary to not only pay my way through life, but to stay alive. I need to keep myself active and creative. Sure Vancouver is an expensive city to live in, but there are many other cities around the world that are expensive as well ... New York, Tokyo, Shanghai, London, Paris ...

Vancouver is a Cosmopolitan city but not yet as cultured as these other much older cities. In some sense living in Vancouver is *sacere* – a blessing

and a curse. It is a blessing because it is such a beautiful metropolis, but it is also a curse. If you pay close attention you may notice me mention several of the curses. I have already mentioned one ... Vancouver is an expensive city to live in.

If I were bed ridden or took ill for whatever reason I have no one who I can turn to. In a real sense, because of my own physical limitations, I walk a high wire act that were I to let my concentration lapse for even a split second I might tumble off to my misfortune or even succumb to the pandemic.

## **Chapter Ten: The Need for Better Data**

We are both fortunate and misfortunate to live in the internet era. There is almost instantaneous access to information in the internet age, but how does one filter out the bad from the good, when it comes to information? The scientist in me describes this as the noise to signal ratio: the noise to signal ratio is rather high!

I guess the first thing we might ask is a definition for bad versus good news. Are we thinking about sad versus happy news, or are we asking about erroneous from valid information? Then there is the question of false news. One rather disturbing trend is the false news being fabricated in a premeditated fashion by offshore hackers such as *Cozy Bear* and the many dozen warrens like them. As we slip into another Cold War surely the President of Russia understands that his friends at Cozy Bear are the ones

pushing us all into peril. The little rabbits in these warrens earn their keep by hopping the fence and stealing other people's carrots.

Think of how productive the Russian economy would be if these hackers were doing something useful with their time and effort. Surely President Putin understands that it was not merely the authoritarianism of the Soviet era but its inherent economic inefficiencies that brought down the Soviet Union. As long as bright and capable young people waste their talents as hackers, Russia will forever remain a 19<sup>th</sup> century country out of step with the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Perhaps one day these young hackers will come to their senses and realize the best years of their lives has been wasted propping up a bunch of Soviet style autocrats ...

The false news aside, say you download a dozen stories about COVID-19 from the internet. How does one filter out the erroneous information from the valid (that is a measure of good from bad isn't it)? For instance, how many stories tell you the Covid-19 mortality breakdown by region, age or gender? How many internet stories merely provide you with recycled news compared to scientific fact?

Mortality has been in the forefront of many peoples' minds as the Covid-19 pandemic spread throughout the world. A detailed and worldwide tally of infections and mortality has been ongoing at several website such as *WORLDOMETER*. Early on I would from time to time visit the WHO website, but since February I had only periodically visited the WHO

website. I am somewhat skeptical as to whether they know what they are doing. I will explain why later.

The Government of Canada has on a weekly basis provided a breakdown by Provinces, and the Provinces have to some degree provided more information, but it is hard to find information say about how mortality in Vancouver compares to the Province as a whole, or say the North Shore (where I live) compared to the rest of Vancouver. This information is available to Public Health Officials, but not publicly available.

I notice that down in the states, a part from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and a handful of states, the state of affairs in the United States are far from united. Within the United Kingdom, it appears somewhat better than that of the US but not as well coordinated as Canada. In both the United States and the UK the Covid-19 pandemic has taken a greater toll of their citizens.

A comparative measure is the reported cases per million and the mortality per million (as of 3 August, 2020):

Country	Reported Cases per Million	Mortality per Millions
United States	14,676	480
United Kingdom	4,500	680
Canada	3,098	237

The scientist in me notices the following based on the published numbers:

Country	Mortality per Reported Case
United States	3.3 %
United Kingdom	15.1 %
Canada	7.7 %

Before you start running around yelling “the sky is falling the sky is falling” like Chicken Little, this serves as a reminder how hard it is to compare, apples, to oranges to bananas.

It turns out that for the Community of Nations we have the following data:

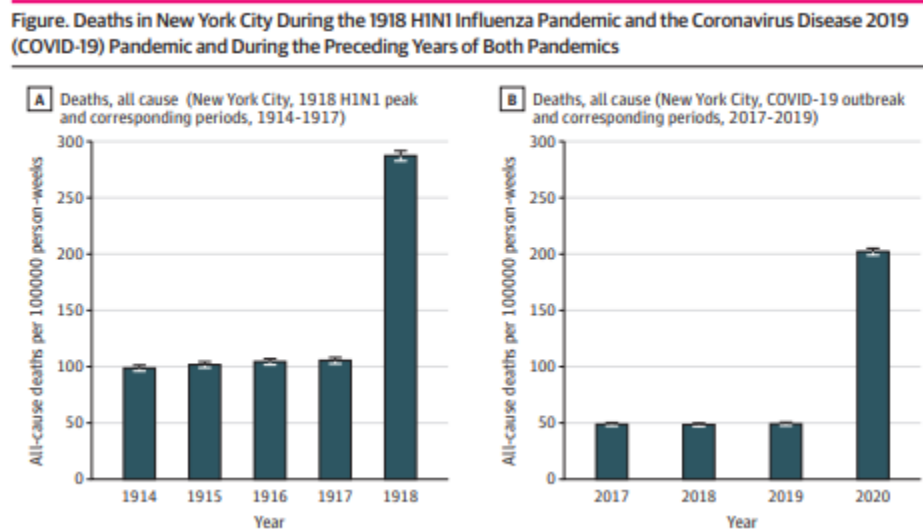
	Reported Cases per Million	Mortality per Millions	Mortality per Reported Case
Community of Nations	2364	89.4	3.8 %

In the case of Canada and the UK it is evident that the number of reported cases is actually far less than the number of people infected with Covid-19. It has difficult to peg down actual numbers of infected people as most who come down with Covid-19 are asymptotic and only are mildly afflicted, and do recover.



Before you again run around and claim the sky is falling the sky is falling, you should realize that not all people who get Covid-19 will die, and that the vast majority who do are aged people with pre existing medical conditions like heart disease, or diabetes, or affinity to smoking and the like.

A recent article in the Journal of American Medical Association Open Network by Dr. Jeremy Faust has shown a sobering comparison to the 1918 Spanish Flu mortality in New York compared to the 2019 Covid-19:



It is the surplus mortality that is worth noting. In 1918 compared to 1917 we see a ratio of 280 deaths per week to 100 or 2.8. In the 2020 to 2019 ratio we see 200 death per week to 50 or **Four Times** that usual annual rate.

Early on in this Pandemic this was the matter that not only caught my attention but also told me that the Covid-19 pandemic may be widespread and severe.

Here in Canada, as well as much of the industrialized world, there have been public closures of schools and other gathering places. There have been social distancing requirements and in some cases civil liberties have been suspended to some extent. It would be so much easier to garner and retain public support for such practices if more regional information was available, as opposed to national or Provincial measures.

Fortunate for my neighbors and I an award winning local news paper *The North Shore News*, has earned their place by keeping residents on the North Shore informed about the number and localities of the Covid-19 mortalities across the North Shore. As I have mentioned some of the first deaths in Canada due to Covid-19 occurred just up the road from where I live.

There has also been several wonderful instructional websites such as *KURZGESAGT*, which ran a very detailed and informative eight and a half minute video about Covid-19 that was put together in record time and aired in the spring of 2020. Much of the genome to the original Covid-19 virus was deciphered by the end of December 2019. The mutations to the original Covid-19 virus have also been mapped out as it has moved across the globe.

I love to tease the pretentiousness out of my biologist friends by reminding them that all the equipment they use to do their assays and assessments were built by physicists, right down to the computers they use, and the semiconductors in the CPU's. Where would the world be without the internet ... invented by physicists at CERN and several accelerator facilities like TRIUMF in Vancouver.

When you are young death is an abstraction. As you get older you experience it at arm's length as grandparents age, or aunts and uncles in your extended family pass away.

Sometimes someone close to you in a special way passes away. Before I was five years old death was introduced to me in a very personal way. I had a friend the same age who came into my life, brought me great joy, then disappeared forever. She was my first love and most lasting love – she was *My First Crush*:

“My neighbour was a girl my age and fun to play with. We shared an interest in picture books. I remember her pleasant smile and her giggle, and her blue eyes and her curly red hair. We could not wait to enter first grade.

But sadly she would not make it. One day she went away to the hospital. When she came home I knew something was wrong. But neither she nor her parents would say what. My once energetic and happy friend now had neither energy nor happiness.

One day I snuck over to see her. She was asleep. I thought my prized teddy bear would bring her good luck and tucked it into bed beside her. She took it with her to the hospital. She never came home.

The time between her diagnosis and her demise was eight months. It was a childhood leukemia that took her.

Her parents, on their return from the hospital were overcome with grief. They asked me if I wanted my teddy bear back. I said no. I wanted her to have it, to play with it in heaven.

She was buried with my teddy bear.”

I wrote this short remembrance and submitted it on 30 January 2017 to *Pique Magazine* in Whistler, BC, for their Valentine’s Competition – My First Crush.

I won one of the prizes worth \$ 700 and decided to donate it to the Emergency Room Nurses at Lions Gate Hospital in North Vancouver in remembrance of my childhood friend. She received palliative care at Edmonton General Hospital under the supervision of my uncle. In the 1960’s effective treatments for childhood acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) were yet to be developed.

Scientists are still uncertain what causes childhood ALL. There seems to be a small genetic predisposition, but there also seems to be a even stronger correlation to babies who are not exposed to normal biome of their surroundings and as a result their immune systems do not have a chance to develop and sensitize themselves to their surroundings.

It seems that as children our immune systems need to occasionally be kicked into us so that it is healthy and functions properly. It is not good to raise a child in a “clean bubble” and not give their immune system a chance to function even for low grade. Recently while doing some background research on Covid-19 I came across a Science Daily article from May 21, 2018 which features an oncologist Dr. Greaves who explained that in his measure:

“ ... early infection is beneficial to prime the immune system, but later infection in the absence of earlier priming can trigger leukemia.

Professor Greaves suggests that childhood leukemia, in common with type I diabetes, other autoimmune diseases and allergies, might be preventable if a child's immune system is properly 'primed' in the first year of life -- potentially sparing children the trauma and life-long consequences of chemotherapy.”

My five year old friend had been raised as an only child by a type-A mother that perhaps thought she was doing her daughter a good deed by bathing her three times a day, changing her clothes three times a day and doting over her

and not letting her go outside and “play” with the other children. Her mother was a neat-a-holic and tried to keep her daughter in a sterile bubble.

It was the sad task of my uncle the chief surgeon at Edmonton General Hospital to explain to the desperate parents that nothing could be done except palliative care and that their daughter’s own immune was killing her blood producing marrow cells, and to also explain them perhaps why.

To relieve her pain morphia was administered and as her parents kneeled and prayed next to her bed each holding a hand my friend was was lifted into the arms of God. One day I hope to hug her again if I am fortunate enough to be welcomed into heaven.

After my little friend passed away the parents went through months of personal torment, then separated and eventually divorced. It seemed the father wanted his daughter to explore and enjoy the world in its fullest while her mother had kept her in a bubble. Neither of them ever remarried nor had children thinking it was perhaps their seed that had sow their beautiful child’s misfortune.

Three years after the loss of my friend, and when I was ill with the *Hong Kong Flu*, while he was doing a house visit for me I asked my uncle about her death.

He sat down on the edge of my bed and in his wisdom and kindness he shared with me his Catholic philosophy of life and death. “In death your

body ceases to function but your soul continues to live on. She was suffering in life but now she feels no pain. She was brave and righteous and now exists in heaven.”

For a moment I pondered the meaning “exist” then I asked my uncle “am I going to die too?”

He took out his thermometer, flicked it a few times to draw the mercury down and then placed it in my mouth. When I was about to ask him again he said “shhh, don’t speak.” For a moment we both sat silently and then he removed the thermometer from my mouth and smiled. “Your temperature has gone down ... no, you are not going to die today!”

I was so nervous and wound up I let out a giant sigh.

“I have something for you” my uncle smiled and gave me a book out of his giant black doctor’s bag. “I am just loaning this to you.” I look at the title. It was a compilation of stories by Ernest Hemingway. I leaned over and looked into his bag. It was a jumble of doctor’s stuff.

He poked my nose lovingly with his finger and then started to pack away his things and turned once again to me. “You know your parents were thinking of naming you after Hemingway, but they changed their minds.”

This was a revelation to me. I cringed thinking I might have been named Ernie. “Oh” I said “...but why?” I tried to feign indifference and smiled nervously.

“When your father was waiting for your arrival in the waiting room he happened to be reading a National Geographic Magazine with an article about Ireland. John Kennedy was the newly elected President of the United States and the theme of the day were ‘things Irish.’ Your father read that St. Patrick was the patron Saint of the Irish. I happened to enter the waiting room when he was reading about the section of the article about St. Patrick to tell him of your delivery and about your perilous health and he looked down at the Magazine and then back up at me and said that Patrick would be a better name for his son than Ernie.”

“I am so glad ...”

He packed away the last of his doctor stuff and stood up “Feeling better ... slugger?”

I nodded.

You might enjoy the story a Day’s Wait, and perhaps a bit rudely I was already diving into the book as he took his leave. If you don’t know the story here it is:

**“A Day’s Wait” by Ernest Hemingway**



He came into the room to shut the windows while we were still in bed and I saw he looked ill. He was shivering, his face was white, and he walked slowly as though it ached to move.

‘What’s the matter, Schatz?’

‘I’ve got a headache.’

‘You better go back to bed.’

‘No, I’m all right.’

‘You go to bed. I’ll see you when I’m dressed.’

But when I came downstairs he was dressed, sitting by the fire, looking a very sick and miserable boy of nine years. When I put my hand on his forehead I knew he had a fever.

‘You go up to bed,’ I said, ‘you’re sick.’

‘I’m all right,’ he said.

When the doctor came he took the boy’s temperature.

‘What is it?’ I asked him.

‘One hundred and two.’

Downstairs, the doctor left three different medicines in different colored capsules with instructions for giving them. One was to bring down the fever, another a purgative, the third to overcome an acid condition. The germs of influenza can only exist in an acid condition, he explained. He seemed to know all about influenza and said there was nothing to worry about if the fever did not go above one hundred and four degrees. This was a light epidemic of flu and there was no danger if you avoided pneumonia.

Back in the room I wrote the boy’s temperature down and made a note of the time to give the various capsules.

‘Do you want me to read to you?’

‘All right. If you want to,’ said the boy. His face was very white and there were dark areas under his eyes. He lay still in bed and seemed very detached from what was going on. I read aloud from Howard Pyle’s *Book of Pirates*; but I could see he was not following what I was reading.

‘How do you feel, Schatz?’ I asked him.

‘Just the same, so far,’ he said.

I sat at the foot of the bed and read to myself while I waited for it to be time to give another capsule. It would have been natural for him to go to sleep, but when I looked up he was looking at the foot of the bed, looking very strangely.

‘Why don’t you try to go to sleep? I’ll wake you up for the medicine.’

‘I’d rather stay awake.’

After a while he said to me, ‘You don’t have to stay here with me, Papa, if it bothers you.’

‘It doesn’t bother me.’

‘No, I mean you don’t have to stay if it’s going to bother you.’

I thought perhaps he was a little light-headed and after giving him the prescribed capsule at eleven o’clock I went out for a while.

It was a bright, cold day, the ground covered with a sleet that had frozen so that it seemed as if all the bare trees, the bushes, the cut brush and all the grass and the bare ground had been varnished with ice. I took the young Irish setter for a little walk up the road and along a frozen creek, but it was difficult to stand or walk on the glassy surface and the red dog slipped and slithered and fell twice, hard, once dropping my gun and having it slide over the ice. We flushed a covey of quail under a high clay bank with

overhanging brush and killed two as they went out of sight over the top of the bank. Some of the covey lit the trees, but most of them scattered into brush piles and it was necessary to jump on the ice-coated mounds of brush several times before they would flush. Coming out while you were poised unsteadily on the icy, springy brush they made difficult shooting and killed two, missed five, and started back pleased to have found a covey close to the house and happy there were so many left to find on another day.

At the house they said the boy had refused to let anyone come into the room.

‘You can’t come in,’ he said. ‘You mustn’t get what I have.’

I went up to him and found him in exactly the position I had left him, white-faced, but with the tops of his cheeks flushed by the fever, staring still, as he had stared, at the foot of the bed. I took his temperature.

‘What is it?’

‘Something like a hundred,’ I said. It was one hundred and two and four tenths.

‘It was a hundred and two,’ he said.

‘Who said so?’

‘The doctor.’

‘Your temperature is all right,’ I said. It’s nothing to worry about.’

‘I don’t worry,’ he said, ‘but I can’t keep from thinking.’

‘Don’t think,’ I said. ‘Just take it easy.’

‘I’m taking it easy,’ he said and looked straight ahead. He was evidently holding tight onto himself about something.

‘Take this with water.’

‘Do you think it will do any good?’

‘Of course it will.’

I sat down and opened the Pirate book and commenced to read, but I could see he was not following, so I stopped.

‘About what time do you think I’m going to die?’ he asked.

‘What?’

‘About how long will it be before I die?’

‘You aren’t going to die. What’s the matter with you?’

Oh, yes, I am. I heard him say a hundred and two.'

'People don't die with a fever of one hundred and two. That's a silly way to talk.'

'I know they do. At school in France the boys told me you can't live with fortyfour degrees. I've got a hundred and two.'

He had been waiting to die all day, ever since nine o'clock in the morning.

'You poor Schatz,' I said. 'Poor old Schatz. It's like miles and kilometers. You aren't going to die. That's a different thermometer. On that thermometer thirty-seven is normal. On this kind it's ninety-eight.'

'Are you sure?'

'Absolutely,' I said. 'It's like miles and kilometers. You know, like how many kilometers we make when we do seventy in the car?'

'Oh,' he said. But his gaze at the foot of his bed relaxed slowly. The hold over himself relaxed too, finally, and the next day it was very slack and he cried very easily at little things that were of no importance.

## **Chapter Eleven: A great debt to the Grocery Store Manager**

This morning something rather disturbing happened to me at the local grocery store. It was a form of vigilantism that is characteristic of other countries, but not Canada. Our maybe it is the sign of the next stage of the pandemic here in Canada – a sort of second wave – but a psychological wave due to stress and strain. What is the expression: we are only three square meals away from total chaos.

It was a sunny Saturday around 1:30 and I had just completed my grocery purchase when I noticed a woman doing something odd. She had finished her purchase and the next person in line behind her was being served. She pulled out her cell phone and was taking a sweeping video of the people at the six check-outs of the store, including me clear across the store, then stepped back into the checkout lane. There were forty people she filmed, including families with their young children.

The grocery store is private property and has a “no filming policy.” As she pointed her cell phone at me I covered my face with my hand. She had not asked my permission to film me so I walked over and asked her to stop filming me and the people in line. I was two meters away from her when I spoke to her and yet she told me to ‘back off.’ I told her that that this was private property and she did not have the consent to film the people in line in this store.

She was rude a second time then said she is sending the video to the North Shore News. This was witnessed by perhaps forty people. I told her if she did this I would sue her. She grabbed her things and dashed out the door obviously intent to do her mischief, even though what she had done was unlawful.

It was a busy Saturday afternoon and there were a number of people waiting to pay for their groceries and be on their way. They were, for the most part, doing social distancing. In fact by stepping back into the line when her purchase was done when she should have gone on her way she had passed within a meter of a family with several young children. In fact she was not following the social distancing requirements.

I went on my way out the door and was on my way home and happened to pass across the drive way from her (a good three meters over) and told her what she had done breached the law. I told her I was one of the Godfather's of The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Senator Perrault and I draft the Preamble to the Charter ... a belief in God and the rule of law).

I told her she had violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms by filming these people in a private place without their consent, and if she had any issues with the store she should talk with the store manager or should take it up with the manager of the store or the Health officer.

She was tall and slim with grey hair and wearing red rimmed glasses. She was in her forties and yet wore a shoddy black blouse and a shoddy pair of



jeans. Standing next to her was her side-kick a short lady in an ill fitting white dress and knobby knees. Here were Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum.

My sixth sense told me that they were perhaps two middle school teachers, probably in the Social Sciences, or something along such an ilk. She had that “know it all” self-importance that only a self-important teacher might have. If she had a science background she would have understood the proper procedure and had talked with the store manager. I sense she has been indoctrinated to view politics before anything else, even good medical science or public policy.

Five times this conceited lady was asked to act properly, politely and appropriately and each time instead she responded in a hateful way.

In fact she told me to “F\$%k off.”

These two words she spouted were hateful, disrespectful and meant to demean.

There is a section in the Criminal Code of Canada that outlines hate and a hate crime. It is article 319 of the Criminal Code. It was obvious she was not interested in acting in an appropriate way. It was obvious she was being hateful.

I turned around and walked away and when she and her friend had made off I returned to the store and had a chat with the store manager. She is a hard

working person who I have thanked her a number of times for her kindness and compassion and the dedication she has shown to her patrons during the Covid-19.

I explained what had happened and she asked me where and when. We walked over to where the little drama had begun in her store and the manager said she would be able to spot the woman in the store cameras. I told her that this lady had threatened to go to the press with a complaint, probably about ‘social distancing’ ... but that I had suggested she go instead to talk with you, the store manager.

I told the manager that if there was any “blow back” from this character I would stand beside her and the store. People like the store manager and her staff have been on the front lines of this pandemic, as much as doctors, nurses, bus drivers, our constabulary. We owe these people a great debt. We should be respectful of what they do and why they do it.

Such little dramas are probably being repeated at many other places in Canada and throughout the world. It is a sort of psychological infection that may take a last toll on both democracy and society as a whole. Social distancing has taken its toll as has the stress and strain of dealing with possible infection and possible mortality.

Here’s a news article about why we should be thankful for the people here in Canada and elsewhere in the world who have been on “the front lines”. It is an article by an American in Canada published on 6 August, 2020

## **I am in Canada where the COVID Police are Watching**

by Doyle McManu

For two weeks, we waited for the pandemic police to come.

In mid-July, my wife and I headed on vacation to a rustic cabin her father built 65 years ago on a small lake north of Toronto.

Most Americans can't visit Canada these days. Because of the coronavirus threat, both countries have closed their borders to nonessential traffic.

But my spouse is a dual U.S.-Canadian citizen, so we were allowed in — as long as we agreed to quarantine ourselves for 14 days.

Not a symbolic, wear-a-mask-and-keep-your-distance-but-go-about-your-business quarantine; a real one — no venturing beyond the cabin and the dock. No shopping trips, no long walks, no visitors.

And no swimming in the lake — a question I rashly asked one of the public health officers who telephoned almost every day to check on us.

"I'm sorry, but no," he said. "It's a public lake. You might run into someone out there. And if you got into trouble, someone would have to fish you out."

“I’m really sorry,” he added. He sounded like he meant it.

But he also reminded me that the Ontario Provincial Police could show up at any time to make sure we weren’t breaking the rules — and that we could be fined the equivalent of U.S. \$206 to \$1,125.

He wasn’t kidding. In June, two Ontario men who violated quarantine after a visit to Minnesota were each fined about U.S. \$850. Seven Americans who took an unauthorized hike in Banff National Park were each fined about U.S. \$900.

It's one reason Canada is doing so much better in this pandemic than we are: Unlike Americans, they set tough rules — and mostly obey them.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention set guidelines to help governors decide when it was safe to reopen their states for business. But President Trump urged governors to ignore those rules, and many did — producing COVID-19 outbreaks across more than half the country.

That didn’t happen in Canada. Just as in the United States, most decision-making on health is at the level of provinces, not the federal government led by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. But Trudeau urged caution, not recklessness, and provincial leaders followed suit — even those from the opposition Conservative Party.

The result: The United States has suffered almost twice as many COVID-19 deaths as Canada on a per capita basis.

Canada's response to the crisis hasn't been perfect. Its two biggest provinces, Quebec and Ontario, saw severe outbreaks in April and May. A wave of infections swept through nursing homes, claiming some 7,000 dead, about 80% of the country's total.

Quebec, which allowed bars to reopen in June, may have acted a little early; the province suffered a mini-outbreak in July.

But elsewhere, reopening has been more deliberate. Toronto, the country's largest city, allowed bars and restaurants to resume indoor service — with lots of spacing — only last week.

As a result, the epidemic's spread has slowed. Canada reported 3,043 new cases last week; California, whose population is only slightly larger, reported more than 55,000.

It's hard to avoid giving some credit to the elusive notion of national character: Canadians — unlike Americans — pride themselves on being a nation that generally follows the rules.

Last month, when Major League Baseball asked Trudeau's government to relax the quarantine regulations to allow U.S. teams to enter Canada to play against the Toronto Blue Jays, the government refused — and exiled the

Blue Jays to play out the season in the United States. It's hard to imagine any U.S. politician doing that to a hometown team.

“Americans celebrate independence, individualism, personal liberty; many distrust government [and] resent politicians,” columnist Andrew Cohen wrote in the *Ottawa Citizen*. “Canadians accept big government, which is how we built the social welfare state.... We defer to authority.”

Last week, Trudeau unveiled a government-sponsored smartphone app that will notify users if someone they've been in contact with tests positive for COVID-19. More than a million Canadians downloaded it within three days.

In the United States, the proposed use of contact-tracing apps has sparked furious debate over invasions of privacy. In Canada, the main controversy has been that the app works only for those with up-to-date Apple or Android phones, so low-income people and the elderly may not have access.

Canada does have anti-government skeptics, of course. Anti-mask crusaders held small protests in Toronto and Montreal. But they attracted only a handful of supporters — and they didn't get public backing from any major politician.

From what we could see, mask-wearing appears almost universal in cities and small towns. And businesses are diligent about requiring patrons to sanitize their hands when they enter. I discovered that when I walked into a

liquor store and forgot to sanitize; an elderly clerk chased me down the aisle with a spray bottle in her hand.

Alas, the pandemic police never showed up to inspect us during our 14-day quarantine. They relied on our sense of civic responsibility — and those threats of giant fines — to keep us in line.

But that's the point.

Canada hasn't needed heroic or draconian measures beyond an initial lockdown to get the pandemic under control. All it needed was a set of sensible rules — and, crucially, a consensus across political parties that the rules were there to be followed.

That path was available to the United States, too. It's a shame we didn't take it.

## **Chapter Twelve: Catching up on my Reading**

While I was recovering from the *Hong Kong Flu* I read through the entire book of Hemingway short stories that my uncle lent me. Today, in coping with Covid-19 I find myself catching up in my reading as well. I am also reminiscing about the other things I did to pass away the time in 1968.

Some of the other books I read in 1968 including *Mathematics for the Millions* by Lancelot Hogben as well as *Mathematics in Everyday Things* by

William Vergara. I would later find out that Hogben wrote his book while he was in hospital recovering from a major illness. In one direct read that spanned two weeks I read these two books and did all the mathematics I could.

In the Vergara book I would also be introduced to how the speed of light was first determined astronomically by Rohmer the Astronomer. In some sense these two books launched my interest in mathematics and astronomy, that and the Space Race between the United States and the Soviet Union to the moon.

While I was sick in bed with the Hong Kong Flu the brave crew of Apollo 8 made their epic circumlunar Christmas Day, which was a Wednesday. Earlier that same week, on their second day of their adventure, I remember watching the Ed Sullivan Show and enjoying my favorite television character ... Topo Gigio.

I tried with my new math skills to plot the Apollo 8 trajectory to the moon and to calculate things like the period of their orbit around the moon. It was fun but I quickly figured why they used computers at NASA to do this type of work.

It was my uncle who brought me *Mathematics for the Millions*. It was a book that he had had since he was ten years old. I returned both the Hemingway and Hogben back to my uncle when I had finished reading them.





**Fig. 4:Topo Gigio (Ed Sullivan Show, 1968)**

A few weeks later my uncle would bring me a brand new copy of *Mathematics: Its Magic and Mastery* by Aaron Bakst. It was the third printing of this book (1941, 1952 and 1967). He had read it in high school. I read it from cover to cover. It was a more difficult book to understand than the other two books. It took me several weeks and my head was spinning by the time I had finished reading Bakst. Even today *Mathematics: Its Magic and Mastery* holds a prominent place in my collection of books and I use some of its contents to teach mathematics.

I had a new found appetite to read things, and not just anything, but adult things. I had grown tired of children's books. I had heard my parents once

argue over the Ian Fleming books my father had, which my mother did not like my father reading. The books had too much of ‘you know what ...’ While no one was looking I snuck down into our basement and opened my father’s old travel trunk, inside of which were hidden away an entire collection of Ian Fleming novels.

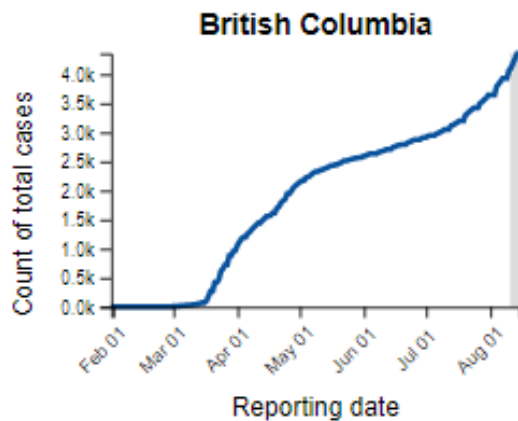
I snagged the novel *From Russia with Love*, hid it away from my parent’s view and then secretly read that excellent novel over the space of several days. There were plenty of adult words in that book. The old Oxford dictionary we had was well used that week. When the film *From Russia with Love* starring Sean Connery was on television that month I pleaded with my parents and they allowed me to watch all the film ... except the bedroom scene.

I also borrowed indefinitely my father’s Calculus textbook by an M.I.T. professor, (Philips I think his name was), from the battered travel trunk and began a struggling study of the subject. At the beginning it was like learning ancient Greek. It was like learning a new language (and this is how Leibnitz the famous polymath would approach calculus ... as a language). But I persevered. Within a few years I was an expert of both *Infinitesimal* and *Integral* Calculus, but during the next few years would turn out to be a long, solitary journey with many steep sloping hills.

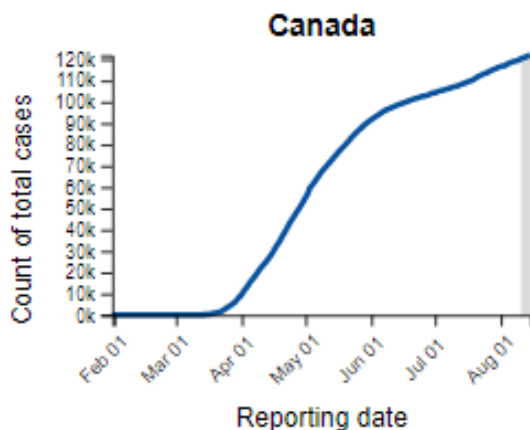
Even when reading *Mathematics for the Millions* there were moments when I thought only God could have invented mathematics! For instance, in the chapter describing *How Logarithms were Discovered* (Chapter Ten of the

1943 edition I was reading) I discovered the delights how one could replace the tedium of multiplication by the ease of addition. Should I remind you that there was an era before calculators when you had to do long multiplication and long division ... using nothing but paper and pencil? If you graduated from high school before the end of the 1970's you know what I mean. Today you can buy a sophisticated calculator for under five dollars (the first ones by Texas Instruments cost a hundred of dollars!). The first modern calculator would arrive in the stores in the 1980's a good decade after the *Hong Kong Flu*. The Casio came along and well now the same calculator goes for around twenty dollars.

One of the mathematical techniques I learned while convalescing in 1968 that I still use quite often is finding either a power-law or an exponential relationships. I have been using this technique to analyze the Covid-19 data for Canada and determined when the first wave would reach a peak. I passed my estimate along to the Canadian Government, the BC Government as well the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London. Then ... wait for it ... the Province of BC decided to loosen some of the pandemic restrictions and sure enough there is the beginnings of a second wave (as of today there are 4,400 people who have been infected with 3,600 recovered):



The economy of BC as well as the rest of Canada cannot remain under restriction forever. As of today for Canada, we find over 122,000 with 110,000 recovered.



Of the 120,000 cases in Canada 100,000 have been in just two Provinces Ontario and Quebec – this is nearly 85 % of the cases, yet these two Provinces only constitute 62 % of the population of Canada. Why the surplus of cases in Ontario and Quebec? Perhaps it is because the citizens

of these two Provinces have tried to get on with their lives – thinking it was safe to do so. Interestingly enough most of the large cluster of cases center around a handful of gatherings in pubs, bars and night clubs, as well as large family gatherings and some illicit summer parties.

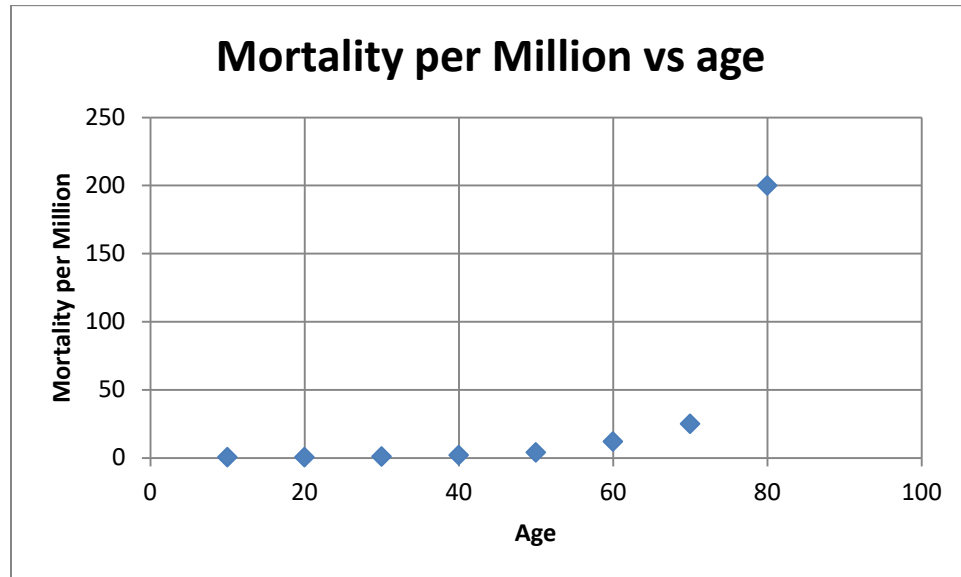
You notice the difference in the tails of both graphs? In the case of Canada as a whole the tail is flattening out while the tail for BC is on the ascension. It seems that after July 1<sup>st</sup> (which is Canada Day – the celebration of the creation of the Dominion of Canada in 1867) people figured it was safe to get on with their summers. After July 1<sup>st</sup> the infection rate in BC took a jump to 2.7 times the weekly average of a month prior. The key number to watch will of course be the mortality rate.

Now that fall is just around the corner and the decision has been made that students here in BC are to return to school in September, how are we to model the future here in BC? The manner in which they are to return to school is still being sorted out. They will return in groups of 30 or 60 students known as cohorts. They will return for just a handful of days each week on a rotating basis.

But as I have pointed out the major risk is not to the students but to their teachers and administrators who are in a far higher risk category.

From age 10 to 30 the risk of succumbing to Covid-19 is about 1 in 2 million. From 31 to 40 it is about 1 in 1 million. From 41 to 50 it is about 2 in 1 million. From 51 to 60 it is about 4 in 1 million.

about 12 in 1 million. From 61 to 70 it is about 25 in 1 million. From 71 to 80 it is about 200 in 1 million. Graphically what we see is this:



**Fig. 5: Mortality per Million and Age**

About 90 percent of the 9,000 Covid-19 deaths in Canada from 1 Feb. 2020 to 15 August 2020 were among people sixty years or older. It is worth noting that most of these people also had additional health issues like heart disease, pulmonary issues, had diabetes or were obese. People who are aged and are in good health have fared better in coping with Covid-19.

It turns out it is the same thing for younger people.

### **Chapter Thirteen: And What About School?**

But what about going back to school then? Presently I teach students math and science. I have been super busy doing ‘distant learning’ teaching during their hiatus from school. During the last six months parents have kept them indoors or under direct supervision. Many of the students I work with have told me their parents do not want them to return to school again in September until the Covid-19 pandemic is over.

The parents don’t just fear for the safety of their children. They also fear that the virus will be brought into their homes when their children return from school! The parents are in a higher risk category compared to their children.

In 1968 the schools stayed open and the students who were suspected of having the *Hong Kong Flu* were told to stay home until they had been given a clean bill of health from a doctor. I was stuck in bed at home for four long weeks. So were several of my classmates, including the girl I suspect gave me the flu in the first place. She was an Italian girl who had come back from a trip to Florence to visit family. Sounds familiar?

Over the past eight months ... over eighty-percent of the Covid-19 cases came into Canada from Europe. Plus que ça changes, plus que c’est la même chose! In actual fact on a weighted sum the greatest single source of Covid-19 cases in Canada are the five percent of cases from Iran which represents a mere 1.5 percent of international travel. The rate of transmission from Iran into Canada is nearly three times that from any other source.

In typical fashion the stated numbers that are officially released by the Iranian Government is suspect and appear to be at least 50 % lower than actual values. The smoking gun is the stated ratio of male to female mortality in Iran which is officially 1 to 1. In most other Arab states it is closer to 1.7 to 1. All things being equal the unofficial numbers in Iran may be between 1.4 to 1.7 the official numbers whether it is the infection numbers or the mortality numbers.

There is a similar problem with the ‘official’ numbers from the People’s Republic of China. There are very few people both within the PRC and outside that believe the ‘official’ numbers which as of today is 84, 827 infected and 4,634 dead. As of today the actual numbers can be estimated to be closer to 6 million infected (with a 60 percent recovery) and 300,000 excess mortality (excess about the mortality measured a year ago) assuming a mortality rate of 5 percent (which is a world-wide average).

What the medical officials in the PRC have been told to do is obscure their ‘excess mortality’ by distributing the numbers among many ‘singular causes’ such as cardiopulmonary disease, diabetes, pneumonia, etc ... so that in each category it would appear as an excess of perhaps 20 % but does not appear as a gross excess due to one specific cause.

In the rest of the world the excess death due to Covid-19 is considered a gross excess ... I guess it is a questions of apples and lemons. Sure they are both fruit, but one is more acceptable than another.



Well ... back to my Italian friend who might have given me the Hong Kong Flu. Her name was Olivia but we called her Liv for short.

In the fall I did visit Liv's home once when I helped to carry something heavy for her, what it was I can't remember. It was a few days after a parent sponsored potluck dinner at school so it might have been a heavy kitchen thing like a pot or china dish.

Liv had small hands and had trouble carrying large objects. If I were to meet her today, in middle age, she would probably be maybe 1 metre 6 and perhaps at most 100 kg. Yes, I know, lucky her!

When we arrived at her home I was about to hand the dish over and be on my way when she said "Now that you are here, why don't you come in for a visit." Her mother wasn't home when we got there and so she dug out the key from under the mat, opened the door and ushered me in. They were Italian and the house was strange and exotic to me. The House had an inviting smell of Italian and Mediterranean cooking.

We went into the kitchen first where Liv served up a big dish of spumoni ice cream which we both ate out of. Now tell me that's not romantic in a cute sort of way. We took the treat back to her room.

Her bedroom was neat and tidy (not like my room). On the back of her door was a poster of the voluptuous Italian film starring Sophia Loren. There was

a Catholic cross over her bed. The furniture was traditional white Italian. Her bed had a white bedspread with frills (we were careful not to spill any ice cream on it). Her wardrobe was open and full of her dresses. She pulled some things out from under her bed, plopped herself down on it and then began to show me some of the neat things that her aunts and uncles sent her from “the old country”.

I remember especially a book of Italian art, which had paintings and sculptures of gods and goddesses. The book had landscape, architecture, portraits and figures all done by Michelangelo. When I saw a figure of a sculpture I flinched but she didn’t bat an eye. I must have turned a bright red. It was the sculpture of David. I suddenly grew very self conscious.

“What’s wrong?” she asked. I pointed at him.

“He’s not wearing anything.” “So”. This was unexpected and awfully forward of her. My face got even redder. I looked up at the clock on her night table and rolled off her bed. “I have to go. My mother will be angry I am late.”

I just stood there and she did not move for a moment. Then with a disappointed shrug she rolled onto her back and sprung to her feet. “Mama mi ah.” She walked me to the front door with the book under her arm. Just as I turned to leave she offered me her art book. “You can borrow my book. Just give it back to me tomorrow at school.”

I didn't want to prolong my stay or make things even more awkward than they were, so I opened my knapsack and she tucked the book in. "I am sorry ... I have upset you."

"You haven't upset me. I am embarrassed."

"Why are you embarrassed? It's just a sculpture. I have seen David you know. He's beautiful. "

I was tongue tied. I didn't know what to say. After a short pause she continued "there are some other beautiful pictures in the book. Tomorrow I will ask you which one you liked the best."

She leaned forward and then did something she had never done before. She kissed me on the cheek. I was surprised as she turned her cheek expecting a kiss in return. "You are supposed to kiss me back". A thought this must be an Italian thing. I kissed her on the cheek in return. I ran most of the way home and sure enough got into trouble for being nearly an hour late.

I tried to sneak in quietly but the trap had been set. My brother ran to tell my mother I was finally home. Well it was so good to have a brother who looked after his brat so well (brat by the way is Slavic for brother).

My mother came out from the kitchen where she had been toiling preparing our dinner. I was given the third degree and just as my knapsack was to be opened and its contents overturned all onto the floor I 'fessed up that I had

stayed after school in the library until the librarian finally threw me out. There would be no checking of my story for the librarian and my mother had already had their fill of run ins and so I got off with a stern warning and a grounding that would last the rest of the week. “Straight home after school, and no dawdling.”

That night after dinner I excused myself to go to my room to do my homework. When I got to my room I left the door just ajar so I could hear anyone coming down the hallway (closing the door would have been too suspicious,) took out my home work and when I was certain the coast was clear I took out the Michelangelo book. For an hour at least I was left undisturbed.

I careful flipped through the book and reveled on the majesty and grandeur of the art. When I got to David my face did not grow hot again. It was then that I think I understood that it was the context of the moment that saw me react the way I did.

Laying on her bed flipping through the drawings and pictures and then coming upon Michelangelo’s creation, which is candidly a tribute to manhood, that moment I felt as naked as David, being admired by Liv. I closed the book and wondered if she would feel the same way I did if we were to sit and admire a female form together.

The following day at recess Liv and I went into the library and sat in a quiet corner. I took her book out of my bag and we started to talk and look at the

pictures together. We got to the picture of David and she quickly looked at my face. I tried very hard but damn, she got me hot and bothered again. It was then that she asked me which picture I enjoyed the most.

I opened to one of the ceiling paintings in the Sistine Chapel, this one of a buxom woman and pointing with a finger I said that I found this painting the most beautiful in the book. The uncovered woman was surrounded with little cherubs. I was turning the tables and sure enough Liv's face went bright red. I guess she did feel the same way. That made me feel strangely warm and blissful on the inside.

Just then the bell rang. Without saying a word she snatched back the book and we walked back to class without saying a thing. All afternoon we avoided speaking. Right after school Liv rushed off home. It was a Friday and so for all weekend I wondered what was up. Monday morning couldn't come fast enough.

That weekend I asked my mother about Michelangelo and Renaissance Art. She asked me why I was interested. I created a legend (made up a story) about an upcoming film on TV about Michelangelo, starring Charlton Heston.

As it would happen something had arrived in the mail the day before last and she went to get it. When she opened the box it was a brand new copy of the Time-Life book on Leonardo da Vinci, which she handed to me. I dove into

the book with a passion (I still have it in my collection and read it from time to time). Monday could not come fast enough.

On Monday Liv seemed to be her cheerful and exuberant self again, but more needy than usual that day. After school she asked me to walk home with her. I said I couldn't today but maybe in a few days. I told her that I had gotten into trouble for getting home late last week.

She seemed genuinely disappointed. "Maybe we can look at some more art together." I told her that I would like that. Every day that week retired to our corner of the library during recess to enjoy some more renaissance art.

Everyday that week she also asked for me to walk her home and every time I had to say no. By Friday she had given up. Well in fact it turned out that I had to go "straight home after school, and no diddling about" that week. Yes ... I did spell the d-word properly ... but in its moral or philosophical meaning!

Girls, I know, like to be appreciated, but how far they wanted to be appreciated would take me more than just six years to figure out. Far more than six years. While it was the 1960's, I was naïve being a Catholic boy and all, and frankly I wasn't in that great a hurry to grow up.

There was a girl in our class named Jennifer. We called her Jenn for short. Jenn had a crush on me (and well on all boys for that matter ... because she expected all boys to have a crush on her). Jenn must have sensed something

was up between Liv and I. Girls always do. It didn't take her long to find out. Liv opened up to Jenn and Jenn began to play games of her own.

I, on the other hand, was happy just to be appreciated for my mind, thank you. But girls will be girls, and they began to have whispered conversations with each other with me in the middle unavoidably listening in. They were evidently having fun at my expense. By this early age I had already learned to let some things roll down my back.

If you haven't already figured it out, Halloween is taken really seriously by children and don't you forget it. No one can safely come between a child and their entitlement for a sugar fix with a chocolate topping.

In October, starting with a shiver and ending with a huge belch we all prepared for Halloween. The conversation was dull to being with. The costumes of choice, witches, ghosts and other ghoulishness.

Until one day, just to be different, Jenn said she was going to dress up as Alice from Alice in Wonderland and Liv said she wanted to be her favourite actress ... you guessed it, Sophia Loren.

By the following morning witches, ghosts and ghoulies were out and people, real or imaginary were in. In conspiratorial whispers we all traded our Halloween secrets and speculated on the hidden desires of our classmates.

I honestly can't remember what I dressed up as but I vaguely remember my bow tie and my little Macintosh checker vest was part of the outfit.

The Halloween party we had in our classroom was fun and our teacher well, I seem to remember she dressed as Pippy Longstockings. During the party we admired each other's outfits, although in my case they were probably being polite.

Alice from Wonderland, Sophia from Roma and I from the Borough of boring sat the games out. We talked art and both Jenn and Liv went out of their way to tell me how much they admired Michelangelo's David. I smiled and asked them about the Venus de Milo.

While Jenn went to get herself more hot chocolate Liv whispered to me and said she had something to tell me. I leaned close and in the blink of an eye she kissed me right on my lips. After that I felt like my world had changed forever ... having been kissed passionately on the lips by Sophia Loren.

Then Liv sneezed and sniffled.

Liv was not at school on the following Monday. She was at home with a high temperature. By the end of that week I too was in bed with a high fever and my uncle would determine it was the *Hong Kong Flu*.

I suspect it was Liv who gave me the grippe (which is French and Ol' English for the Flu) which had been brought back from Italy.



## Chapter Fourteen: Is Nutrition a Key?

At the worst moment of my Hong Kong Flu all I could do is sleep. I vaguely remember that for two days I did nothing more than sleep, getting up only to visit the bathroom and to drink some chicken broth.

While I was ill my paternal grandmother had come to my aid with a big pot of home-made chicken soup which she delivered in person and which was left to me and only me to consume over several days. Home-made chicken soup is actually a good way to replenish your electrolytes ... especially sodium. And inside the soup she had put celery and carrots, chopped parsley (where she got the parsley in the middle of winter in 1960's Edmonton she never told me) and some pasta and a secret ingredient ... which to this day remains a secret! My grandmother took this secret to her grave. I suspect it was some brandy or something along that line. Brandy is an age old antiseptic.

AS I got sicker and sicker I noticed that my urine lost its yellow color. That was not a good sign my uncle told me ... so on his next visit he brought me a big box of Stoned Wheat Thin Crackers made by Christie. He told me to consume the whole box of crackers over the next four days. Sure enough the yellow came back.

Many of the millions who died of the *Spanish Flu*, the *Asian Flu* and the *Hong Kong Flu* died because they were not taking in the nutrients their

bodies needed to remain in a healthy homeostasis. The same thing appears to be happening with Covid-19. When your body's immune system is fighting an infection it takes first priority in the order of things. Your other organ systems take second or third place. I have already shared with you the little story about my magnesium deficiency. It seems we also need sodium, potassium, calcium and zinc, as well as a plethora of other vitamins and trace minerals for our bodies to function in homeostasis.

**If you start to feel sick with Covid-19 talk with a medical health practitioner about your nutritional needs, including vitamins and minerals.**

As my temperature continued to climb my uncle had talked with my paternal grandmother and he started to drop off care packages of fresh leafy green vegetables like spinach, and parsley, as well as other vegetables like carrots, again just for me. He would later tell me it was for the vitamin A and D.

Early on in the Covid-18 Pandemic as I studied the infection and mortality rates in Spain, Italy and elsewhere in Europe I began to wonder whether the different diets of Europeans were correlated to their infection and mortality rates. One of the things I noticed was their different intake of fresh vegetables. A Mediterranean diet seems to lessen their infection and mortality rates. Key then might be the intake of nutrients from fresh vegetables. I also noticed an anti-correlation to tomatoes and tomato based sauces.

**It might help you to stay healthy during the time of Covid-19 to eat fresh vegetables but avoid plants of the night-shade variety ... like tomatoes.**

One of the first things I did when Covid-19 descending on Canada is I downloaded Julia Child's famous 1960's French Cuisine cook book and started to make vegetable dishes. I started with her recipe for the vegetable dish Ratatouille (sure it has tomatoes in it, but as a minor ingredient). This dish is one of my favorite when it is plain and not baked or covered in baked cheese.

The first time I was introduced to Ratatouille was when I was visiting my aunt the previous year. She made Ratatouille and naïve me I asked what the ingredients were.

She looked at me suspiciously until it twigged on her what a six year old boy may be thinking. "Mon dieu! C'est tout des vegetales!"

"Donc pour quoi il est le Ratatouille!" I asked in the most polite way possible.

"T'est fou!? She was really angry at me.

With an angelic smile I responded, "Oui, je sais ma tante."

Three decades later when I was visiting my aunt she would make me ratatouille with a special ingredient she said. She had put some meat in it. I looked at her suspiciously as she had served me but had not partaken any of the meal herself. Then I frowned at her.

“Tu mange pas?”

“Non, j’ai pas faim pour ce ratatouille ideale.”

At that point I choked and set my fork down and well started to feel queasy.

“Ma tante ce joue une blague.”

“J’ai pas trouve du rat, donc j’ai mi du crocodile.”

I felt a bit better and said to her “ce n’est pas le ratatouille ... c’est la crocotouille!”

We both roared with laughter. She served herself and then started to eat the crocotouille finally admitting ‘c’est pas de crocodile, c’est du boeuf!’

The double entendre was the meal was made in a croquet pot! There is an interesting story about something that happened after our dinner together that I will get to shortly. But back to the fresh vegetables ...

I notice that out of practical necessity there are many Brits who have asked for and are working allotments ... plots of public land that has been set aside

for vegetable production. They are working their own modern versions of *Victory Gardens*.

I think this news is wonderful news in so many ways. First, since many people are unemployed or underemployed at the present time they can work to put food on their tables. A few years back I helped two sisters who were teachers starting out on their careers to work an urban garden to put food on their tables during their lean summer and fall months (they were paid on an hourly basis and drew very little income from June to the end of September ... four lean months).

Second, the whole fresh vegetable thing will help them cope with Covid-19. Brits are not known for their fondness of fresh vegetables ... but I suspect many of them have drawn the same conclusions I have about the correlation between Covid and nutrition.

Third, there is also the whole psychology of the pandemic. With social distancing and isolation it is hard for people to stay upbeat. There is something very fulfilling to working the land and harvesting your own vegetables, then cooking meals with them and then enjoying the meal itself. It is the fact that people can stay grounded with their land and its people doing gardening, despite the social distancing and isolation. Besides fresh air and sun is also a good way of staying healthy.

I have been encouraging my colleagues and friends to venture out a get some sun and exercise while taking proper precautions.

When the worst of it was over for me with *Hong Kong Flu* and the spring of 1969 finally arrived, part of my long road to recovery was spending private time with my paternal grandfather working a small allotment he had at the outskirts of Edmonton. Just like me, my grandfather was the second son in his family. He could relate to some of my life's disappointments living in the shadow of a self-important first born.

My grandfather had come to Canada from a small farm in south-eastern Poland. Many things made him happy, none more so than being a farmer and growing his own vegetables. I can still see him in his tattered straw hat, in the hot mid-day sun, leaning on his spade, telling me stories how life was like in the old country 'when he was his age.' One day I will sit down and write a book about my grandfather and his stories.

## **Chapter Fifteen: A First Lover**

But you are probably wondering about my aunt and the rest of our evening together. My aunt had a drawing that I first saw in 1967 that stood out. It was a figurative drawing of a woman in a very familiar style. I finally asked my aunt about her prized drawing (I am leaving something out about the piece to not spoil the tale).

"Yes it is genuine," she said.

"But why does the woman look so familiar in the sketch?" I asked my aunt.

“Guess!”

So I did!

“Yes it is!” and I was right.

“How can that be!” I pealed incredulously.

“Well ... it is a bit of a story. Promise me you won’t tell your mother I told you it.”

So I had to promised. I felt bad doing this but it was worth it, believe me!

“You mother had a French boyfriend before she met your father. He was a Naval Officer from Marseille stationed at St. Pierre in the Saint Laurence.”In case you didn’t know, in the St. Laurence not too far from Montreal are two small islands that are remnants of France’s presence in North America.

“He would come to Montreal from time to time on leave and this is where we met him. He would take us both out to movies and dinner and the like.”

“Both of you?” I queried.

“Yes, one of us was the date and the other was their chaperone. Your Catholic grandfather would not let his daughters go out on a date all by ourselves.”

“So you were the chaperone?” I said.

“Sort of ...” The smile on her face was enigmatic. “We kind of took turns.”

“Things almost got to the point that your mother soon fell in love with him. He really wanted her to sneak away with him and well ... become lovers!”

“Oh ... and you?”

“Bah ... I started dating a young Montreal lawyer.” To fast forward they would later marry and he would eventually become a Provincial Court Judge.

“Then the French Naval Officer got posted home. It broke your mother’s heart so much so that she decided to go and visit him that summer in Marseille. The thing is she didn’t tell him we were coming. I went with her as her chaperone.”

“What happened?”



“Well we showed up at the address on the letters he was sending your mother and it turned up to be his mother’s place. She answered the door and wondered who your mother was ... ‘T’est pas Jacqueline!’”

Your mother should not have asked but she did ... “Qui est Jacqueline?”

“Elle est la bien-aimée de mon fils. Ils se marient la semaine prochaine.”

“Ou est ton fils?” my mother asked her.

“Mon fils est a Cherbourg.”

That broke your mother’s heart. Your mother and I had taken a boat across from Montreal to Brest and had two weeks to spend in France. She thought we should go to Cherbourg. After finding out about Jacqueline and their upcoming marriage your mother’s heart was broken and she wanted to be alone so she went one way to the beaches in Cote d’azur in Southern France and I went north to Paris to see the sights. She would meet up with me a week later in Paris.”

“Then it was in Paris she met him?”

“No, it was at one of the beaches in Southern France. He was on vacation with his family. She happened to be sitting on a beach crying when he came along and struck up a conversation wanting to find out why she was so upset. So she told him. In her state she did not recognize who he was.”

“But why is she naked in the drawing!” I asked.

“She was in fact wearing a one piece bathing suit ... but out came his sketch book and pencil and he did a drawing of her *sans habillement*, signed it and gave it to her. When she recognized his signature she stopped feeling sorry for herself. He had cheered her up. She ran after him and apologized for not recognizing him. He was charmed by her candor so much so that he invited her to spend the rest of the week talking art with him. They met three or four times at a café to discuss Modern art.”

“But ... how did you get the drawing?”

“Well when we met up Paris your mother was a changed woman. It took me a whole day of pressing her before she told me why. When she showed me the drawing, I held her to ransom. She had to give me the drawing to keep me silent.”

“Mon Dieu.” Just the thought of blackmailing one’s own sister! But my aunt knew she had to now finish the story. “I guess you don’t know do you?”

“Know what?”

“Your mother married your father on a rebound.”

Oh mon dieu.”

And neither the French Naval officer nor your father was your mother’s first lover ... it was Picasso! ”

Yes that was the signature at the corner of the drawing ... Picasso ... 1959.

My parents were married in 1960.

Sitting and listening to this story recounted by my aunt it was then that I remembered my mother had cried the whole month when Picasso died in 1973.

## **Chapter Sixteen: My Delirium**

November, was then and will always be about Remembrance Day for me. There were, in first grade, solemn stories that were read us, preparing us to be good Canadian citizens.

We made ornate and dignified poppies with earthy and appropriate colours (Lime Green was no where to be seen). We learned “*In Flanders Field*” by McCrae and studied the maps of Europe to see where all the tragedies happened. For the first time I told Liv and Jenn about my godfather, and the telegram and how I felt, and received a sympathetic hug from both my classmates.

These were our first tentative steps in good citizenship. These steps would take us on an epic trek up the road to meet real veterans. We did our civic duty the day before Remembrance Day when we had a school gathering for our ceremony and then afterwards our class walked to the old folks home up the street from our school to visit some veterans and their families and join them for tea and cookies.

It was a warm day and so I was dressed in a short sleeve white cotton shirt, short pants, my ubiquitous bow tie and Macintosh vest. If you could add a Charlie Brown head with protruding ears you would get the picture. I had strong bones and a hefty disposition when I was in first grade.

My mother still dressed me in Husky Jeans, which were fashionable at the time. Jeans, I would later find out, is what the P.O.W.'s and prisoners wore. How appropriate, don't you think. That day, however, I was not dressed like a prisoner, but like a perfect gentleman.

When we got to the old folks home we were welcomed like long forgotten nieces and nephews by strangers, some of who looked as old as dinosaurs. The oldest we were told before hand, had fought in the Great War of 1914-18, and some had fought in the Second World War. One man was blind (he had been gassed in 1915 over fifty years before) and several men were missing arms and limbs.

Until this day I had never seen people with missing limbs and so it was hard for me to look. I didn't quite turn away, but I also didn't come near.

because I did not understand, as a little boy I was simply scared. With time my understanding would grow and my fears and ignorance lessen.

Off in the corner was a sad and lonely lady who stared unceasingly out the window. I walked over and stood beside her chair. It was a moment before she turned to acknowledge me. “Who are you” she asked.

I said nothing because I did not know what really to say. Instead I pointed to my teacher and my classmates. “Oh” she continued, “you must be from St. Brides.” I nodded.

“I use to be a teacher once.” With that mention, I warmed to her and smiled. “What is your name son.”

“Patrick” I responded.

A smile broke across her sad face. “I’m Irish you know. What’s you last name.” Things looked promising.

“Bruskiewich” I said.

In a flash and with a loud flurry she bellowed “That’s not an Irish name!” I was startled and my eyes started to tear.

In a flash, our Principal rushed over and wrenched me by the arm. “What has the boy done now.” His powerful grip on my arm hurt me. My teacher had by now turned and some of my classmates as well.

Tears were flowing down my cheeks, but not from the pain of her words, but from the pain of the Principal’s wretched grasp. I squirmed and tried to break free but he just held me ever more tightly.

Then the unexpected happen. The elderly lady looked direction into my principals eyes, gave him the evil stare and firmly retorted “Unhand the boy!” The Principal instantly let me go. I could feel the blood once again flow down my arm to my hand and fingers.

She wagged her finger at him. “I thought I taught you better manners!.. “ Meekly he responded, “Yes Miss”.

The old battleaxe continued. “Fetch the lad and I some tea and a biscuit and then let us be.”

My jaw hit the floor. In some sense she was the embodiment of the nightmare elementary school teacher. Old school. Principled. A strict disciplinarian!

My Principal did what he was told. The elderly lady leaned over and quietly confided in me “I was his teacher when he was your age. He was quite a

handful you know.” I could swear she blinked at me. But maybe a battleaxe for a teacher isn’t all that bad!

There was an empty chair next to her and she motioned for me to pull it closer and sit. In “*Patrick Fashion*” I pushed and it made a loud noise as it was inched along the floor.

Almost on queue the Principal returned with my cup of tea and not one, not two, but three peek freeen cookies, the special ones with the strawberry filling! I was in heaven. Instead of handing it to me he carefully placed it on the round little table next to us, doily and all.

She pointed to my arm. “Shame on you. Look at that. He is going to have a bruise on his arm.”

Then another miracle. The Principal meekly responded. “I am so sorry Miss. I thought he was bothering you.”

“You know this young man reminds me a lot of you at his age.” I knew without looking up that the Principal was peering down over me. I did not look up.

I was meekly dunking one of the cookies in the tea and filling my mouth so I would not have to speak. What in the world could I have really said to what was transpiring, except perhaps that I couldn’t believe it.

“Shew” she said waving her hand and like a dutiful lad the Principal walked away. I dunked the last of cookie in the tea and nibbled. By now I had put crumbs all down the front of my vest and short pants.

“Look at you. Stand up and brush the crumbs off.” I careful set the tea cup down on the table stood and brushed the crumbs off me onto the floor.

“Tsk, Tsk ... don’t they teach you anything at school? In my day and age we would carefully gather the crumbs in a hand and then just put them back on the plate. Otherwise the mice would visit the parlour and feast.”

I bent down and started to pick up the crumbs. “Leave it. They will come and they will sweep them up.”

I stood back up and asked her “Didn’t they have vacuums when you were young?”

“No we didn’t have electricity till 1916. Sold the farm and moved to the city that year.”

I sat back down and settled in. “Why did you move?”

“My husband had gone off and enlisted. He left my son and I to manage the farm all by ourselves. In 1916 my husband died in the Great War and so I had to sell our farm and move to the city. ”



“Couldn’t your son help.”

“He was only two when his father died. I wrote my husband many times and sent him a few picture of his son but I never found out if he ever received my letters. I never received anything back from him. Then one day a letter arrived from Ottawa saying my husband was missing and presumed dead. They never found his body.”

In later years when I saw pictures of the Western Front, and the mud, gore, and morass of the first world war I would hear her voice as this elderly and lonely said ... *They never found his body.*

“Isn’t your son coming to visit you today?”

“My son was a pilot in world war two. He flew Lancaster bombers. He went missing over Germany in 1944. They never found his plane. This time I received a telegram that my son was missing and presumed dead.”

I sat silently with my tea cup on my lap. I was looking down into the depths of the cup very sad of what I had just heard.

She seemed to read my thought. “On Remembrance Day I try to forget.” I looked up at her and she looked so lonely, so old and so sad.

“Miss ... I lost my godfather in 1965 ...” I proceeded to tell her my story as best I could. When I finished she seemed better off to have heard my story. Or so a small boy would wish.

“You know”, she said, “you are wearing the Bruce Tartan. I imagine that Bruskiewich means son of Bruce.”

I was all ears as she told me the story of Robert of Bruce, of the Scottish and Irish Bruces, of Wellington and Michael of Bruce, Lord Durham, of James of Bruce a past Governor General of Canada ... of Lord Elgin ... in short order my head was spinning and she then stopped.

I looked at her, completely amazed about both the story and how fine a story teller she was. I had always thought that as people grow older they became forgetful. This was not dinosaur. This was an encyclopaedia.

From across the room the clarions called and our visit was coming to an end. Before I knew it we wee little lads and lasses were being rounded up, set in pairs and marched on our way back to our class room and then home.

The elder teacher insisted she walk with me to the door. I made a motion to want to whisper something in her ear. She bent down and before she could respond I had planted a kiss oh her cheek.

“Oh my” she said, “no student has ever done that.” She turned to the Principal and continued “look after this lad. If I hear you are bullying him I will have you across my knee lickety split.”

The Principal had no choice but to stand there and take it like a man from his old school teacher.

Every Remembrance Day since I have returned as a young boy to where I was that November of 67.

It was a few days before Remembrance Day 1968 that my temperature peaked and for at least forty eight hours it was touch and go for me.

My uncle came and did his doctoring thing and then prescribed me something which would put me out for six hours at a time. For the next two days I would sleep then wake almost every six hours on the nose (it seems I can do that still today ... I have a pretty good internal clock). Then I would have my temperature taken and noted, and have some chicken soup, and then had to take a cold bath for a good half hour to bring down my temperature. When I was in the bath the door had to be left open which was somewhat embarrassing. Thank goodness for face cloths which don't always have to be placed over the face but could hide away 'the best of me'.

Then it was time to take the prescription again and back to bed I would go.

During my deep slumber I entered a delirium state and started to dream about so many different things. I dreamed about playing in heaven with my green eyed red hair friend who had died three years before, while she danced around with my prize teddy bear. In my delirium she spoke to me in a lyrical and cryptic fashion. The moment I awoke I could remember seeing her but could not remember what she was telling me. During those two days I would visit with her several times.

The last time I dreamed about her I imagined she had changed. I remembered her eyes and her smile and recently I came across the same eyes and the same smile in a young woman. I snagged the picture and decided to include her picture in my book.



**Fig. 6: Her green eyes, red hair and beautiful smile**

But sadly when I got better I did not dream about her ever again. It was almost like she was being my guardian angel at the gates of heaven. Her smile was warm but she was not beckoning through the pearly gates.

I also dreamed about the uncle I never had a chance to meet and to get to know. Well actually he did hold me in her hands ... but only once ... over a baptismal fountain.

Goethe once said that “one lives but once in the world.”

When we are children we are in such a hurry to grow up. Later, as adults, we wish we revert back to childhood again. Based on my life’s experiences, I have always been a firm believer in letting children remain children for as long as possible and that we should protect them as best as we can from the evil and turmoil of the world. Ignorance is bliss and childhood the most blissful state of ignorance.

When we are all young there is a moment when we realize that we might die, and that leaves an indelible mark on our psyche. We don’t quite come to terms with our birth or beginning until later in life; for boys when their testicles drop and girls when their breasts form and they begin to ovulate.

It was in my fourth year, in 1965, that I vividly remember my first real remembrances as a child, and these remembrances are strongly tied to the realization that I was mortal.

On a bright and sunny summer day, just a few weeks past my fourth birthday, I was happily playing, cocooned in the warmth and familiarity of the solarium in our home in Edmonton Alberta. I was sitting admiring my mother's prized cactus collection, all set out in their little concrete pots. I was carefully touching the spines, wondering about these odd and incredible plants including one that was in full blossom, with a pink and purple flower.

I did not have a care in the world, and was rather naïve, when the front door bell rang, quite unexpectedly. It made me jump and prick my finger on a spine. It is perhaps that momentary and sudden pain that etched the memory of that moment in my memory. As I watched a tiny drop of blood seep from where one of the hardy spines had pricked my finger I felt the sensation so odd, of being startled and then pained in quick succession, that I did not react.

My mother hurried from the kitchen where she was preparing our family's dinner to answer the door, not all that happy with the distraction (she had three very young children underfoot). I stood up and followed her to the door. . It was the middle of the afternoon.

When she opened the door there was a yellow cab taxi driver, cap and all, delivering an urgent telegram. I overheard that it was from Montreal. The taxi driver tipped his hat and left then my mother closed the door and tore open the telegram.

The telegram was from my grandmother. It was about my uncle Claude, my mother's youngest brother, and my godfather. My uncle had just been married three weeks. Perhaps my mother was expecting some happy tidings about a baby or something.

In the blink of an eye everything changed forever. My mother began to cry uncontrollably and quickly bolted from the front door, nearly knocking me over. She ran past us for the comfort and solitude of her bedroom. I followed and could hear her pick up the telephone, dial a number then speak to my father on the phone. "Claude is dead. Come home when you can."

We kids did not know what dead meant, but we at least knew to quietly wait for our father to return home. When my father returned home, summoned hurriedly from work, he too sought the solitude of their bedroom and we three were left unknowing until my father came out of their bedroom to tell us the news. My uncle, and godfather had died in a tragic accident while serving overseas in France with the RCAF and NATO.

I had only once met him once, when he held me, age four months, over the baptismal fountain at a catholic church in Edmonton and vowed to look after me. Death be not proud!

Death for a four year old is an abstraction, as is a far off place like France, and acronyms like RCAF and NATO. These were grown up things and as I listened to my father's simple explanation I decided I needed to find out what these things meant so I could better understand these grown up things!

We tried the best not to get underfoot while my parents sorted out what to do next. My mother could not stop crying. Claude was one of seven children. He had been the youngest and her favorite. Now there were only six.

He was dead, "*Il est mort*," my mother kept repeating over and over in French.

I asked if he would have a funeral. Earlier in 1965 I had watched on our old black and white Philips Television the pomp and ceremony of the state funeral of Winston Churchill. "Yes he would." Solemnly, I went to my room and began to decide what I would need to take with me to my uncle's funeral in France.

Later at dinner I was somewhat disappointed when I was told we would not be going and that we would miss the pomp and ceremony of my uncle's funeral in France. France didn't seem so far away when you looked at a map. Arrangements would be made with the Government of France to allow an honour guard of RCAF personnel to march and bury my godfather at Choloy military cemetery near Nancy, in France.

My maternal grandfather's brother, Charles August St. Arnaud, would ask his old wartime friend Charles de Gaulle, then President of France, to permit a dignified burial. I was later told that French soldiers were present as an honour guard and would bear witness to the entire RCAF wing in full dress



uniforms as they marched to the Choley cemetery in precision ranks, marching to the cadence of the *Colonel Boogie March*.

Perhaps I should tell you that my father was then a Wing Commander RCAF, a rank he has long retired from. It had been my father who had inspired Claude to join the RCAF. He too was struck by the loss, as was I. Tears still come to my eyes when I hear the Colonel Boogie March. I think often of my dead godfather and the life and family that would never be. His widow Peggy would marry three times but never forget her first, true love. Claude was a handsome, dashing young man, almost Romanesque in his visage. Hollywood stars had nothing on my Uncle Claude. His sudden and unexpected loss is a reminder that we should not forget what Goethe had to say of life, “one lives but once in the world.”

A godfather is there to watch over and protect their pledged. While he has not been here in body, Claude has always been here in spirit, in my heart and in my actions. I have kept my faith with him and all like him. I myself later served the Crown and Canada, at one time being the youngest naval officer in Canada. I am also infirmed by way of my naval service. I think I have earned the right to say that I have done him and his memory proud. Before I die I hope to bring his body home to Canada and bury his earthy remains next to that of his parents, my grandparents.

The beginning of my adult journey in life began when I was four years old and witnessed the delivery of that sad telegram in the summer of 1965. It is the only time I have ever seen my mother cry. Perhaps my journey through

life will come to an end when someone plays the Colonel Boogie March at my funeral.

That year, 1965 was also the year that Winston Churchill and his saying “*Never Give In*,” entered my life. He probably said it more than once, but you understand what I mean. And he was probably smoking one of his legendary cigars when professing to this ‘ultimate gall.’ No one could tell him what to do!

My uncle Charles St. Arnaud knew Winston Churchill, as well as Charles de Gaulle and other wartime leaders.

My uncle was, in fact, present in the next room when Yousuf Karsh took the famous picture of a scowling Winston in the Speaker’s Chamber of the House of Commons in Ottawa in 1941.

Karsh had just grabbed Winston’s cigar and Churchill was beside himself with annoyance. Then “flash,” the pic was taken and then the cigar was returned to him.

Before he left Ottawa on that cold December day of 1941, on his way back from a visit to FDR at the White House in Washington, DC, Churchill stocked up with cigars, and brandy too, both of which were in short supply in wartime Britain.



**Fig. 7: Winston Churchill, Y. Karsh, Dec. 1941**

After his famous “*some chicken ... some neck*” speech to the Canadian House of Commons on December 30, 1941, Churchill ducked out and up the street to buy some brandy, wine and spirits to take home with him from a small shop just kiddy corner to where Joachim von Ribbentrop, ex wine merchant and then foreign minister of Nazi Germany once sold alcohol in Ottawa.

My uncle went to the shop with his friend. It was Churchill who reminded my uncle, the journalist that, Ribbentrop use to sell wine in Canada, and had

quite a Canadian connection in the pre-first war period. My uncle wrote the story of Winston's visit to the liqueur store but it was never published, having been squashed by wartime censors.

In this unpublished article my uncle wrote in December 1941 Winston Churchill told him that he first met Ribbentrop before the First World War when Ribbentrop sold German wine, champagne and spirits, and got to know him quite well during the interwar period, 1920 – 1933, and even bought some German wine, champagne and spirits from him, “albeit preferring the taste of French wines by far.”. This was, of course, before the wine merchant Ribbentrop turned Nazi, and during Churchill's wilderness years in the 1920's.

With a chuckle Winston Churchill, British wartime Prime Minister told my uncle he still owed Ribbentrop some money for spirits that had been delivered but not paid for, but “*accounts will be settled in a different fashion once the war was over.*” As Churchill said this he grabbed his neck tie and tugged it, a bit too harshly it would turn out. The tie knot became fixed and Churchill's face began to grow bright red as he struggled to undo the tie. He shouldn't have done this school boy antic for Churchill had recently suffered a small heart attack while visiting FDR the previous week at the White House and Winston's doctor was still worried about his general health.

As I was growing up in the 1960's the whole history of the Second World War was being played out on television for the young like me to experience. At the gentle age of four, watching his state funeral, I learned about the lion

hearted Churchill and how in the summer of 1940 the Nazis controlled the rest of Europe and at the United Kingdom's Darkest Hour, he ventured forth to chide the British ... *Stay Calm and Carry On!*

Why crawl when you can walk ... hell why walk when you can sprint through life. In the fall of 1965, some months after Winston Churchill's televised state funeral, in my quest to better understand the man and his legend, my mother caught me serendipitously smoking one of my father's Churchillian cigars. Supposedly I was greener than fresh grass clippings when my mother finally jimmied open the bathroom door and vented her retribution. She broke her prized hair brush on my backside that day. I can recall not being able to sit for at least a fortnight.

"Just wait till your father gets home" she threatened. At the time, "*Never Give In*" seemed like good words to live by. All I could think about as I fought back the tears, and rub my raw backside, was how long I would have to save my precious pennies to pay for the expensive cigar I had just enjoyed ... well maybe not enjoyed, but endured. I had asthma as a boy, and in retrospect smoking a stinky cigar was not a good idea for a boy with asthma.

You are probably also a little intrigued as to how my maternal grandfather's brother would be on close and personal terms with the legendary Charles de Gaulle, President of France. Before the war he was a journalist in London and in Paris and during the war he did special service for the Crown. De Gaulle awarded him the Croix Lorraine. My Uncle Charles August St.

Arnaud, “*journalist extraordinaire*”, would end his distinguished career as Queen’s Printer in Ottawa during Canada’s Centennial year 1967.

I recall that the summer of ‘65 was also when astronaut Ed White would do his walk in space, the American answer to Cosmonaut Titov’s romp in space. I remember being glued to the screen of our old Philips Black and White TV as commentator Ed Cronkite walked us earthlings through the heady and complicated process of “extravehicular egress and ingress” from a Gemini space capsule.

Every time he said those technical words came up I would repeat them. By dinner time that day I was a bona fide space cadet, with my own vernacular. The fiction of space flight has never excited me half as much as the realities of space flight. Twenty years later I would meet astronaut John Young just by chance while he arrived at a high technology company I was working with in Richmond, BC.

Here was a genuine American hero who had walked on the moon and piloted the Space Shuttle and all I could venture to do at the spur of the moment was to ask him about his March 1965 flight on Gemini 3. In retrospect he didn’t seem to mind. In actual fact John Young enjoyed my questions and would have talked with me much longer were he not stolen away by the CFO of the company. The CFO was waiting impatiently for the man and here I was “wasting his time.”

This bean counter would never forgive my imprudence because John Young would later say to the Company's CEO how much he enjoyed his chat with little old me (then at the lowest rung of this corporation's ladder} and how he could not remember the first name of the man at the top the CFO (another John by the way). Sure, astronaut John Young was in town to talk synthetic aperture radar and Shuttle at MDA, but he is a gentleman and gentlemen he did not take to rudeness.

I think that day in 1965 when White took his walk around the earth is the day was the day I became hooked on science and technology. I would also find that time and interest would provide me a unique understanding of space related technology, including the potential of synthetic aperture satellites and space based reconnaissance. Years later, during a visit to the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum, I was nearly overcome with nostalgia as I looked up at a Gemini capsule in the technology gallery. It might even have been either White or Young's Gemini.

I am proud to be a good child of the 1960's, born at the tail end of the baby boomers. There is a funny story of some 21<sup>st</sup> century youngsters chiding a man from the 1960's how out of date he was since he didn't use cell phones and the like. The man pauses to think for a moment before wisely responding ... "in my generation we perfected the computer, jet aircraft, interplanetary rockets, satellite, and sent man to the moon ... what has your generation brought into the world?"

As a physicist and mathematician I find technology impersonal and frankly boring. But yet I am knowledgeable of science and technology just selective on how I wish science and technology to intrude into my life. Give me a slide rule and I can add or subtract logarithms. What you don't know what a slide rule is? Bet you don't know what a phonograph looks like either!

While growing up most kids of my generation read either the *Hardy Boys* or *Nancy Drew* when they grew up. I admit I was a space cadet; I read *Tom Swift*. If you never heard of Tom Swift and his gadgets then you are safe to be let loose on the world. If you are a Tom Swift affiliate then you are a brainiac and Quantum Field Theory might be your middle name. In a whisper I will admit to you I still sneak a peek at the occasional Tom Swift book. Nostalgia ... nostalgia.

In the 1960's, just an hour's drive north from our home in Edmonton, was an RCAF airbase which we ventured to visit on public holidays and special event days. Long before other technologies had begun to elicit an interest in me I had already kicked the tires of sub-sonic CF-86 Sabre-jets and CF-100 Canucks – the Clunks as they were called, as well as the supersonic CF-104 Starfighter and Voodoo interceptors.

I recall on one occasion when we were visiting and my father had turned his back for a moment, I was caught accosting the front tire of a CF-104 Starfighter with my best soccer kick. In an instant I was lifted off the ground by a warrant officer who transported me by the collar of my jacket and dangled me unceremoniously off the ground in front of my father.



“Does this ruffian belong to you?” the warrant officer bellowed at the top of his lungs! Dropping me to the ground before undertaking the required salute to my father who was in uniform.

In an instant, I had hide myself behind my father. My father nodded. “Well sir, if you don’t mind ... keep this misfit of yours away from my bleedin’ aircraft. He was kicking the stuffin’s out of that jet over there.”

A decade and a half later I would encounter the very same gentleman when I was a young naval officer. Master Sergeant Vincent would teach me unarmed combat and field training at CFB Esquimalt when I was 20 years old. It was he who remembered me. The Master Sergeant took an immediate liking to me and gave me the benefit of training that could only come from someone who started out at age 17 with Stirling’s marauders in North Africa during the Second World War and later served in the Special Air Service, and the Canadian Airborne Regiment.

There is a famous scene in a bar in the film the *Presidio* where Sean Connery, playing a wizen Lt. Colonel, takes on a thug with nothing more than his right thumb. “I will only use my right thumb, because my left thumb is too powerful.” That’s pure Master Sergeant Vincent. The only difference is that Sean Connery doesn’t have a handlebar mustache like Master Sergeant Vincent, and hadn’t cut his teeth terrorizing the Afrika Korp.

During our visits to the airbase in ’65 I could also not but stop and admire the old Mosquito aircraft mounted on a pedestal and the entrance of the air

base. There is something awe inspiring about a high performance aircraft made out of plywood that could out fly all but the German's Me-262 jet aircraft and Me-163 rocket planes of the Second World War.

The “*Mossie*” as the Mosquito was affectionately called by its pilots would be the first “stealth plane”, and would inspire a secret German response, the Horten series of flying wings which were in their development phase in the closing months of the war.

The thrill of seeing a low level sortie of a gaggle of two CF-104 Starfighters on *Battle of Britain Day* in September 1965 marked another right-of-passage for me. I had seen them on the ground and now I was seeing them in the air! I could swear the two aircraft flew right over our house by how their passage rattled the floorboards, and the contrails that were directly overhead. In an instant they were gone, leaving but a contrail of combusted JP fuel to mark their over flight.

Years later I would come to learn that the CF-104 Starfighter had only one reason to exist for the R.C.A.F., and that was to be able to drop nuclear weapons on the battlefield in Europe if war broke out between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. And hundreds of Canadian pilots would die flying the plane, which became known as the *Widow Maker*, many of whom are buried at Choley, next to my godfather.

I knew Winston Churchill had something to do with the Battle for Britain and “*Never Giving In*”. Now I was convinced more than ever that this

Churchill fellow was a person I would have to get to know better. Later that very day was my escapade with the cigar.

Cigars, planes, rockets and loud noises, what else would a young boy want? If only I could read. Point me to a well stocked public library. There was a branch of the public library up the road at Capilano Mall. So began my love of books, libraries and librarians. Even today some of my best friends are librarians. I prefer sitting and working in a library, to sitting and working at home alone or in a coffee shop surrounded by gossip gollies.

For a five year old pictures were a good place to start and I remember in perhaps the spring of 1966 coming across a picture of a young boy sitting on the remnants of his house during "*The Blitz*" in London in a book about the Life and Times of Winston Churchill. The Blitz was now added to my vernacular.

The boy in the picture from the Blitz was about the same age as I was when I came across his picture in the book. I remember thinking how sad he looked. In 1965 when I sat at the little table to look at the pictures and then had got up and had asked the Librarian to tell me what the words were under the picture she felt then as I do now that ignorance is bliss in childhood and she told me that the little boy had lost his toys and was sad as a result. Poor little Boy was all I could think.

When I again came across the same picture some years later, this time being able to read the captions, I would find that the boy was sad not merely

because he had lost his toys, but his parents and his house as well, to the German bombs and the Blitz. His mother and father were in fact dead and buried under the very debris that he was sitting on. His look was one of shock, bewilderment and disbelief. He had also lost his innocence too. Death be not proud!

God bless that kind Librarian. I remember she had kind eyes and strawberry blonde hair and always smiled. This kind lady would make it fun to be dropped off at the library in the Mall while my mother took my older brother and younger sister shopping with her. I was the bookish type. I could be amused for hours looking at the pictures in the books and took to taking books off the first two tiers of the shelved hither and there in the library if only to search for good pictures. As long as I picked up after myself, something that I would do just to please this strawberry blonde guardian angel, I had the run of the place.

When she had a moment she would read a passage or two to me or teach me a word or two. I was already quite good with my alphabet. She also taught me how to spell my name. With that skill and knowledge I think I became a real person. When a child learns to write their name is a banner day for their journey though life. We should throw the child a party!

We do not have a choice as to when we enter this world, and so a birthday is a sort of throw away. We do have a say when and where we write our name for the first time. That's a conscious achievement. Spoken words disappear, written ones do not. Something that has a written word is real. A sound is

ethereal. My mother would always have a hard time dragging me away from my second home, the library, and would begin to let me take some books home with me.

The children's library card that the Library issued me was pink and precious. As life will eventually teach me, everything pink was precious, in one way, shape or form. Pictures were no longer enough. Evidently it was now time for me to learn how to read for myself.

My fifth year was a hiatus of sort. I would try, honestly I would, to keep myself out of trouble and busy around the rental duplex that we lived in. In truth I was somewhat bored. I wanted to go to school. A brother nearly a year older than I was in first grade and I had a sister a year younger than me who took up all my mother's spare time and energy.

Television just wasn't a distraction like it is today. Then we had two channels, the TV was black and white and yes even colour TV had yet to find its way into the home. It will still be two years in the future in 1967 before it arrived. Ah the 1960's ... life was so much simpler then!

When my mother wasn't looking I might go next door to visit a neighbor or venture further up the street. Being locked in my room wasn't much of a punishment because there wasn't much else to do to begin with. If I had some good books then I was not upset being locked away. I took to folding paper airplanes and when the paper ran out I took to unfolding the paper airplanes, re-using the paper and trying new designs.

Even today I admire a good fold on paper and something that travels steadily and over long distance through the air. I once launched a trusty design out of the window of my parent's old apartment on the 28<sup>th</sup> floor of a building in the West End of Vancouver and it sailed up the street and was still airborne six minutes into its flight, carried forever upwards until it sailed out of sight. I think it travelled well over a kilometer.

In November 1968 in my Hong Kong Flu delirium I could hear my uncle Claude speaking French to me and asking me how his sister, my mother was coping. The two of them, my uncle and my mother, had been very close to each other ... he being the youngest of seven children my grandmother raised (four boys and three girls). My mother evening had to look after him as he played in the bath.

My grandmother told me when I visited her once when I was in my thirties and she in her seventies that she had two other babies who did not make it past a few days. One was a boy many weeks premature and died less than an hour into life (from what we now call hyaline membrane disease). The other who died was a girl who refused to suckle. She lived for nearly a week. An autopsy later showed that her urethra had not properly formed and her bladder was blocked. They had tried to catheterize her but they were not successful. She was so small. They had to run a tube through her torso into her bladder. The little baby girl passed away quietly in the middle of the night while she slept. It was understandable then why she did not want to feed.

Since neither of these two babies were named nor baptized they were not given a Catholic funeral and burial. I do not want to know what became of their earthly remains, but they are probably in heaven, crawling at the feet of my green eyed red haired friend ... at least I hope so.

### **Chapter Seventeen: Manometer!**

Yesterday there was a terrible lightening storm here in Vancouver. It started about one on the morning and thundered overhead for perhaps an hour. It woke me out of my slumber. I immediately noticed that I was having trouble breathing. Something was causing my asthma to react.

In the space of an hour I understood how patients trying to cope with Covid-19 in their lungs felt. But I did not panic. I figured the breathing distress I was encountering could be treated and so I locked myself in my bathroom and started up my shower and let cold moist air fill the room. I figured it might be either the high temperature or the ionization of the air that was causing me problems with my breathing.

It took several hours before I began to breathe easier. We are organic machines made up of organic materials. I knew that the lining of my lungs was drying out and being irritated by the hot ionized air ... and I was able to prescribe my own treatment because I knew enough about how my body functions.

In high school I decided not to take biology, instead focusing on math, physics and chemistry. In my working world I would come full circle and eventually have to learn about the human condition when I began work for a Canadian company manufacturing nuclear medicine cyclotrons. At the time I joined this little company they were up to their eyeballs in hard work completing the Research & Development stage of their product development. They had decided to enter a market place dominated by two high technology giants – the American company General Electric Medical Systems and the their German counterpart Siemens AG. My primary role for this little company was to market their technology and over the space of several years I was able to win them preeminent contracts in Canada and the United States, even winning a prime contract from General Electric in New York City a few blocks away from the Rockefeller Center.

To successfully do this, I had to teach myself basic medical biology, as well as the basics of radiopharmaceuticals, which are pharmaceuticals with either PET or SPECT radioactive tracers attached (eg. Fluorine–18 in the case of Fluorodeoxyglucose or FDG for short).

When I was in university I also helped a friend at med school. Let us call her Julia. She is an actual person, but I have changed her name because she is a doctor here in Vancouver and I don't want to embarrass her in any way.

Julia had gotten a low mark in her first year anatomy class final exam because being a Catholic girl, unmarried and not hooked by sin or temptation, she did not know much about male physiology. What she knew



had all been ‘book learning.’ She needed to learn about male physiology first hand.

When you take anatomy as a med student you literally dissect a cadaver of someone who had donated their body to science. Her luck was she dissected a middle age woman (she never told me the cause of death).

So, being a woman and having done a full dissection of a woman’s cadaver she knew the ‘ins and outs’ of the feminine. But she did not know the ‘ins and outs’ of the masculine. After her low mark on her anatomy exam Julia was given a day’s access to a male cadaver but it had been all but dissected and the bits and pieces were preserved in jars.



**Fig. 8: The Dissected Man**

The best of him in one jar, testicles in another, prostrate in a third ... you get the picture. The incredible dissected man!

She needed a male anatomy model to help bring her up to speed. No other male was available so (she thought she might ask her brother but that was too weird for her)... in the four weeks we met twice a week and I let her poke and prod me and well ... she now knows more than I can even imagine. Sure, girls are complicated, but boys are also complicated, but in a different way. Her anatomy exam came in two sections: one was a two hour sit down written exam and the other was forty five minutes in the cadaver lab with the instructor standing over a cadaver with a pointed – what’s this, what’s that.

This time she did not stutter or blush ... *‘that’s a man’s penis, and a very small one at that’* is what she told me was her answer to the instructor’s prodding. The second time she took her anatomy exam she got a perfect score and was able to proceed to second year of med school.

The day after her exam we met for lunch and in her euphoria she jokingly told me that on a man there is a man-o-meter to measure his blood pressure and state of health (which is a play on words for such an instrument – a manometer – exists to measure fluid pressure).

In fluid mechanics a manometer is a piece of tubing that curves upwards and is open at the top. The other end is connected to the fluid whose pressure is

being measured. The difference  $h$  in the fluid height is a measure of the pressure differential on both sides.

As a Catholic med student she was trying to get a rise from me. My response to her that day was, ‘were women so lucky!’

‘But we are ... we are ...’ but being naïve and not experiences in such things I did not catch her nuance.

We were once meeting for lunch and half way through my soup and ham sandwich she pulled out a picture and showed it to me. “What is it?” she asked me.

I looked at it and shrugged my shoulders.

“It’s a cadaver cut down the midriff.”

I could not finish my soup and ham sandwich.

Over the rest of her time in med school I helped her often enough that she invited me to come write the finals with her ... ‘you would get a very good mark’ she said to me ... ‘although you would not make a good doctor. ‘ Why? I get queasy at the sight of blood or when someone is in pain.

Yep, I wouldn’t make a good doctor.

Things boiled over between us just before Julia left for her residency back east. She had just graduated from med school and finally had a few days off. We had been seeing each other for several years, but I felt that I was just one boy among many others.

For Julia her career came first.

We didn't have a complicated friendship. We were both very Catholic and went to church together. I sat for her as her ersatz male patient, and so there was no mystery left in me. Still, I loved her.

Early one Sunday morning Julia called to invite me over so that we go for a bicycle ride, then to church and dinner. When she called I did not think anything of it. She was after all leaving for residency in Ontario and I might not see her again for many months.

When I arrived Julia was glowing. Her parents were out. Instead of sitting in their living room she invited me into her bedroom for the first time.

I sat on the bed as she got ready. I watched her in the mirror. To my great surprise she took off her blouse. She did not have a brassiere on.

She turned to me and asked "do you like what you see?"

Speechless, I blushed and turned my head away.

She huffed, put back on her blouse and stormed out. I dashed after her. As we stood on the porch she bitinglly said, “I don’t want to see you anymore. I invited you into my bedroom and there you just sat speechless!”

She pushed me out the door and slammed it in my face. That was the last time I saw her. Even after three decades I am still scratching my head.

Oh Julia! I guess she wanted me to enjoy the mystery in her.

My life has been complicated because of a multitude of health problems I have encountered. Over the past three decades I have to say that a great legacy of her four year friendship with me is that I now know more about who and what I am than if I had not met her and well ... helped Julia through med school.

If we had shared a bed that afternoon ... I suspect we might have perhaps eventually married.

It’s just that she was so committed to her career that I doubt we would have had much of a life together. The last I heard ... Julia was still single and married to her career.

## **Chapter Eighteen: A Simple Picture**

Just the other day I thought about the “we are ... we are” comment that Julia shared with me. This simple picture holds a special place in my heart.



**Fig. 9:Garcon et Fille, age neuf**

You might think it because of its simple composition, or the simple dichotomy that is barely evident. It might be because of the poignant and gentle nature of the photograph or because of its simple artistry.

This simple work of art holds a special place in my heart merely because *le garcon et la fille* in this figurative photograph by the French photographer Jean-Francois Blauret are nine years old. This lovely picture was taken in 1970, a year after my bout of Hong Kong Flu, and when I was nine years old, and well, there for the grace god I could very well be the boy in this lovely picture, and she could be one of my best friends of the day. I say this

in the figurative sense and not the literal sense for the photograph was taken in France and I have yet to visit *La Republique Francaise*.

The age of nine is perhaps the perfect age. I confess I can't remember much of that time in my life, except for a few rather personal reminiscences, a few of which I will share shortly.

At nine you are well along being a child, but not so well along that the distractions and complexities of puberty and adolescence have set in. Boys and girls are at that stage in their lives are rather equal and not that unique unto themselves, apart from whether they are tall or big boned or awkward for some reason, which in my case was because of big feet, and ears that were set out in a rather elephantine fashion. Every so often I see a young boy who looks a bit like me when I was their age and seeing them does twig memories.

At that simple point in my simple life, in grade three, I had several girl friends who were that close to me, that had we posed for this picture we could be *sans habillement* as the French would say, and it would be just fine. We could giggle and play and all was innocent ... curiosity but in a purely childish way.

At the age of nine the heaviness of the world has yet to settle upon our shoulders, as it would in just three or four more years when the pituitary gland kicks in and kicks starts the other glands that serve to differentiate the genders. At age nine we might speculate where babies came from, if only

because we had younger siblings that sort of arrived in their rather spectacular ways. Slowly, ponderously and with that inevitability of expectant mothers becoming more and more expectant with the passage of nine full months.

We were growing up in the best of times. But as children some wanted to become adults, and quickly. I don't think I was one of them. The adult world did not intrigue me to the extent that I would have wanted to give up all the uncomplicated pleasures of my childhood, as well as the simplicity of my life.

My biggest responsibility at age nine was to make sure I made my bed up each morning, did my homework, and took a bath at least three times a week. I grew to enjoy baths and so it was more than twice a week. And being partly French Canadian, I didn't mind using lavender or rose scented soap.

I was teased about that by the boys in my class, some of whom constantly smelled like farm animals and thought that was a reason to be proud. It did not take me long to notice that the girls in my third grade class did not mind my presence in their midst as much as they did the other boys. Perhaps it was the French soap?

Or maybe it was because I did my homework and like reading and enjoyed art. My mother had given me a Time-Life book about *Leonardo da Vinci* to read and I began to divide my time between science and art. In some sense



my parents tugged me in two directions, my father the mechanical engineer encouraged my interest in math and science, and my mother the teacher who encouraged me to read and enjoy art.

I remember fondly some of the art projects we did in school, particularly the Thanksgiving turkey with the tail made from the tracing of our little hands and the multi-colour of the basic and earthy watercolours we had at school. For some reason the fall is my favorite time of year. Maybe it was the harvest, or the harvest feasting or the anticipation that Christmas and a new year was in the offing.

I have to admit I enjoyed the company of some of the girls in my class over those of the boys. And I did spend an unhealthy amount of time alone, reading in the library, or out in a quiet corner of the school yard. Sometimes I would be joined by a classmate or two, who usually sat with their legs tucked up under their dresses, or sometimes not tucked in at all. When they noticed I did not take issue in seeing frills, they let the frills be seen.

At this age you can hardly notice the physical difference unless you look closely. But the temperaments of boys and girls were indeed different. That was something I definitely noticed around that time. I was a shy little boy with my big feet and big ears when I was nine and shy little boys are vulnerable and are picked on by other more aggressive children. Did you notice I said “*children*”.

If you half expected me to end that sentence with the phrase “*aggressive boys*,” you have not been all that observant when you were growing up, or perhaps now that you are an adult you have a prejudgment that needs to be reconsidered. Girls can be aggressive too. Children that age tend to be driven not by their nature, by their hormones for instance, but by their nurture and what they have picked up along the way, either at home or in the school yard or god forbid, elsewhere less familial. They also tend to mimic adults in some of their behavior.

When you are a shy little boy in elementary school you are picked on by more aggressive children. The nit-picking can be of a different nature whether it comes from other boys, or from the girls around you. Boys tend to be kinetic and physical in their aggression, while girls tend to be relational and emotional in their aggression. I received both, to the point of tears, because I was not merely shy, but I was a sensitive little boy too.

But back to the perfect age of nine. Three things happened at that age of my life that taught me a thing or two about the psychology of boys and girls, me being a sensitive and observant child and all when these lessons were being taught me. They were lessons in kindness and compassion.

There is someone I know who is turning thirteen this year. I teach her science. She is having a hard time of things as of late because of social distancing and because she is entering puberty and she is doing this pretty alone. For girls I am told that transformation can be very scary.

Girls are very social creatures especially while they grow. And who can blame them? It is hard to go from being a child to a complicated woman in what ... twenty four months?

She has an older sister who can sort of help her along. For instance, she took her shopping recently for brassieres. But since I teach her science she has taken to asking me some important and unanswered questions about the science of life ...about hormones, for instance, and hair, and why it is growing ... you know where, and where babies come from. I told her perhaps to start by asking her mother and if there are any unanswered questions she can ask her sister, then if there are still some unanswered questions, science questions that is, she can ask me.

And there were unanswered questions and so I had to tip toe around the more awkward matters to try to explain how babies come into being ... with gametes and ovum and sperm and the whole shebang. Then she asked me the \$ 65,000 questions about how a man and a woman make a baby ...

Gulp ...

Then it was time to visit some online medical sites which talked about a woman's *source de vie* and the differences between boys and girls. The materials had drawings and schematics, but never a real picture. This exasperated her. So I took her to an artist's model website, Croquis café, and showed her one video with a female and one with a male model (who

kept himself nearly always covered and could only be seen from a distance).

Then she admitted she had seen her younger brother's masculinity and then asked "are all boys so small?"

"Well," I said, "just as a girl grows and changes so does a boy. And just as every girl is different, so is every boy."

"Then ... how big is your ... " I stepped in to keep her from finishing her question. "That is something you should perhaps not ask ... at least not until you are a bit older!" She was being both cocky and naughty at the same time.

The look of disappointment on her face was too much for me bare so I shared with her a secret of life. "It is a matter of form and function. You know about female physiology. You now know about your uterus and where it is located within you. The form and function is that the distance between the outside of you and the opening of your uterus is that distance."

But still she seemed perplexed. So I asked her what irked her.

"But my brother is only that long." We were on Zoom and so she held her fingers up to the camera ... a few centimeters apart. "And it seems to just dangle there between his legs." She giggled when she said this. Obviously she had been spying on him and he didn't know it.

I hesitated before I asked her but I did “is he always like that?”

“I don’t know ...”

I was going to say something else but I thought it best. Asking her to go ask her brother would sort of be weird. I shared with her the fact that medical science has showed there is a correlation between the size of a man’s thumb and his masculinity. She wanted to ask me more about this but I suggested maybe she should have another talk with her mother, and we pressed on doing some other science together.

The following week she obviously had something on her mind. So halfheartedly I asked her what it was. She told me she had asked her mother and her sister about the whole ‘boy bits and dangling’ thing and somehow her brother overheard her asking her mom or sister.

I stayed silent as she smirked. Obviously that aspect of life was no longer such a big mystery to her.

One important thing about her finally made sense to me. It was the fact that she had been suffering from insomnia and had also lost her appetite as well. Her smirk twigged my understanding of why this was happening.

She wanted to stay a girl and not become a woman and had decided if she did not eat and did not sleep this would slow everything down and let her remain a girl a bit longer.

Now she is sleeping and eating and has come to terms with what is going on in her life.

### **Chapter Nineteen: The End of the Summer**

Now that the summer of 2020 is winding down it is reported that a second wave of infections have begun in Canada. Here in British Columbia the number of active cases has tripled in just two weeks. And on top of this, there are plans to send children back to school in September.

Two things are worth perhaps noting about going back to school, first that children who are infected with Covid-19 are unlikely to succumb to the virus unless they have some underlying and severe health problem. The second is that the virus has itself mutated so that it can more easily enter a cell. We can expect a statistically significant number of children to catch COVID-19 which does not just pose a hazard to themselves, but to their older parents, teachers and school administrators.

I have already counseled a few students to suggest their parents ask their school administrators about provisions to remain home for September and October and continue distant learning. The students' parents are in their late fifties and not in very good health.

Early on in the Pandemic I flagged the possible link between the ACE2 enzyme and COVID-19. Some of the earliest work on this link was undertaken and reported by a group of French researchers near Paris, who had direct ties with the Wuhan Virology Lab they helped set up.

Scientists exploring how COVID-19 infect human cells have shown that the SARS-CoV-2 spike (S) glycoprotein binds to the cell membrane protein angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2) to enter human cells.

COVID-19 has been shown to bind to ACE2 via the S protein on its surface. During infection, the S protein is cleaved into subunits, S1 and S2. S1 contains the receptor binding domain (RBD) which allows COVID-19 to directly bind to the peptidase domain (PD) of ACE2. S2 then likely plays a role in membrane fusion.

Once the COVID-19 virus is within the host cell the mRNA it carries then is taken up by the ribosome, which begin producing copies of the mRNA and then go onto infect other cells. The infected cells do not know that it is a virus it is copying.

The original virus first seen in Wuhan in the fall of 2019 has mutated many times. It is possible to keep track of the mutation by reading the genome or genetic code of the mRNA.





## **Chapter Twenty: My Uncle the Doctor is Now Gone**

As I have mentioned, about forty percent of all cancers are linked to viral causes. A decade ago my beloved uncle the physician succumbed to a cancer caused by a virus.

Prior to his demise his elderly mother took ill and my uncle looked after her. She died of a cancer caused by a virus. He caught the same virus and died less than a year after his beloved mother Bernice. They are both now in the loving arms of God. Here is my uncle's obituary taken directly from the newspapers:

TWOREK, Edward Julian, M.D., F.R.C.S(C) January 23, 1935 - November 30, 2009. It is with sadness that the family announces Ed's passing. He leaves his beloved Olga, wife of 53 years and their children, Teresa (Jim) Richardson, Mark Tworek, Joe (Diana) Tworek, Francis (Edi) Tworek, Peter (Sheri) Tworek, John Tworek, Judy (Andrew) Macri, Mary (Richard) Angus, Stanley Tworek; eighteen grandchildren; and one great-grandson who will miss their dear husband, father and Dziadziu. He leaves also his devoted sister, Janine (Joe) Puszkars. Ed was predeceased by his parents Joseph and Bernice Tworek and by his brother Walter Tworek. Ed was a dedicated physician and surgeon, he was very proud of his profession. Ed will be greatly missed by his relations here and in Poland, and by his many friends and classmates. A Prayer Service will be held at 8:00

p.m. on Sunday, December 6, 2009 at Connelly - McKinley Funeral Home, 10011 - 114 Street, Edmonton, Alberta. A Mass of Christian Burial will be held at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, December 7, 2009 at Holy Rosary Church, 11485 - 106 Street, Edmonton, Alberta. Interment will follow at Holy Cross Cemetery. In lieu of floral tributes, memorial donations may be made to the Westview Health Center, 4405 South Park Drive, Stony Plain, Alberta, T7Z 2M7, or to the Cross Cancer Institute, 11560 University Avenue, Edmonton, AB T6G 1Z2. Grateful thanks to Dr. Christian Fuchs and the caring staff at Westview Health Center; and to the doctors and medical people at the Cross Cancer Hospital.

That year it was a very cold winter on the prairies and my parents wanted me to accompany them from Vancouver to Edmonton for my uncle's funeral. Unfortunately I had a bad cold and I was unable to travel by air.

My uncle had been a Provincial Health Officer as well as the health officer for Western Canada for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. As my thank you to him I passed along a request to the Prime Minister's Office in Ottawa that perhaps the RCMP could provide an honor guard for his funeral.

The Superintendent of the RCMP for Alberta appeared the following morning, hat in hand, at my uncle's home to inform his widow that they would be provide a full entourage to honor him.

I understand his funeral entourage went down the main avenue in Edmonton, Jasper Avenue, to the Holy Rosary Church. I like, so many tens of thousands of others, owed this kind and modest man their lives. The Church had standing room only as thousands turned up for his funeral.

It is worth noting that mortality rates due to viral cancers peak during the winter months in Canada. They correlate closely to mortality due to the myriad of influenzas we encounter each year.

The first wave of COVID-19 in Canada started in mid-February 2020 and peaked by mid-spring. Many of these patients struggled for several weeks to fight the virus. Assuming a fourteen day average to their plight this means that these victims were infected between late- January to late-March 2020.

During this first wave 90 % of the 9,000 victims we have had so far died.

**A second wave of COVID-19 mortalities will most likely coincide with the winter months of 2020- 2021. All things being equal this second peak may occur sometime between mid-December 2020 and mid-March- 2021. Without good medical practice the second wave will be less deadly than the first.**

## **Chapter Twenty One: Partly a Matter of Context**

Perhaps how we perceive the COVID-19 pandemic is partly a matter of context. Each year many thousands of Canadians are diagnosed with cancer

and thousands die. Most Canadians live with their cancer diagnosis for five years of more.

Here are the oncological numbers for 2019:

	Male	Male (percent)	Female	Female (percent)	Total
<b>Diagnosis</b>	115,800	51	110,000	49	225,800
<b>Mortality</b>	44,100	53	39,300	47	83,400

**Table 2: Cancer Rates in Canada (2019)**

In contrast, based on present day data for COVID-19, we can expect perhaps 225,000 Canadians to be diagnosed and treated for COVID-19 and perhaps a mortality of 12,000 by the end of 2020.

In relative terms then, the mortality rate due to cancer is six to seven times higher than that of COVID-19. Or stated a different way the mortality rate for COVID-19 is 1/6 to 1/7 that of cancer.

In 2019 the number of people who died in Canada from all causes was 287,730. If we view COVID-19 mortality as being an excess mortality to this total then we see that if we estimate 16,500 deaths in a year due to COVID-19, this is an excess of

$$\frac{12,000}{287,730} = 0.042 = 4.2 \%$$

In terms of 37 million Canadians this is an additional 3.2 deaths per 10,000 people.

In relative terms this is about seven times higher than the mortality rate due to traffic accidents. It is also about three times higher than the suicide rate.

In another comparison, approximately four times as many Canadians will die from heart attacks (around 49,000), while each year over 20,000 men and women die of smoking related cancer, which is a preventable mortality.

It is also worth noting that the annual cases of the ‘normal influenza’ hospitalizes around 12,000 people each year in Canada and sees the death of around 3,500 people. We can therefore expect COVID-19 to be about three times more lethal than the annual cases of the ‘normal influenza.’ What many of these cases are, are carry over viruses from previous pandemics like the Hong Kong Flu.

In contrast, it is estimated the *Hong Kong Flu* pandemic of 1968 to 1969 killed 4,000 Canadians. In 1968 there were 21 million Canadians. Adjusting for the 37 million Canadians we presently have this would mean perhaps 7,100 deaths.

Comparing apples to apples, this would mean COVID-19 might be about 70 % more lethal to Canadians than the *Hong Kong Flu* from 1968.

The CDC in the US today on August 26<sup>th</sup> 2020 their COVID-19 analysis and they have found that 6 % of the first 155,000 victims of COVID-19 have succumbed solely because of the virus. With the remaining 94 % of the mortalities the victims had on average 2.6 other pre-conditions that caused their demise.

From April 12, 2009 to April 10, 2010, the CDC estimated there were 60.8 million cases of H1N1, 274,304 hospitalizations, and 12,469 deaths in the United States.

Apples to apples, at the very least, with a similar 6/94 split there would have been reported around 210,000 deaths due to H1N1 from April 12, 2009 to April 10, 2010. One observers has suggested that if this H1N1 flu season in the United States were reported the same way COVID-19 is, “there would have been over 2 million deaths reported by the media” from H1N1.

At the heart of the *Spanish Flu* pandemic, which was caused by H1N1, was widespread tuberculosis. A sizable number of victims in the 1918-1920 *Spanish Flu* were suffering from preconditions like tuberculosis (eg. from Abbott AC: The death rate from tuberculosis [letter] Science. 1922;56 (1449):387–388.)

*“During 1918 and 1919 there was a sharp upward trend to the curve [of tuberculosis death rates], followed in a year, or at most two years, by a marked downward direction of the curve — much steeper in its descent than that preceding 1917–1918. ... The pandemic of influenza of 1918–19 carried off, in a brief period, a large number of tuberculosis subjects that would otherwise have lived on and their deaths been so distributed through later years as not materially to have disturbed the uniform downward direction of the tuberculosis curve that precede the period of the great pandemic.”*

It appears the same thing is happening with the COVID-19 pandemic: People are dying because of several concurrent pre-conditions pushed over the edge by COVID-19.

**What this is telling us is that it is imperative to remain as healthy as possible if you wish to get through this COVID-19 pandemic safely.**

## **Chapter Twenty Two: The Starry Heavens Above.**

“Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above and the moral law within.”

Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, 1788

It was in an astronomy book I read in 1968 that I first came across this marvelous quote by Immanuel Kant. It has been an inspiration to me over

the years. I have to admit though that his books are on my “to read” list but I have yet to pick any of them up and read them. I have, nonetheless, read excerpts of Kant’s writing.

One of the books I read in 1968 I now own in my personal library. It is a book by the German-American scientist Willy Ley titled “*Watchers of the Skies: An informal history of astronomy from Babylon to the Space Age.*” Even today, over a half-century since its publication, it is a fascinating read. When I read it while recovering from the Hong Kong Flu, it was one of the new books in the collection of our local library. Perhaps it is both the content and the author’s writing style that I find compelling. This book helped launch my interest in astrophysics.

Strangely enough it is chapter 13 in this book, that about the asteroid belt ... *The gap between Mars and Jupiter* ... and the Kirkwood Gaps that I found most intriguing in this book, for it inevitably leads to the question how did our solar system form. This is a question I have been exploring for a good half-century. No one has yet solved this question to completion. Everything has a birth, a childhood, adolescence, a middle age and an end, even the universe in its entirety.

I am chipping away at this interesting question. If you search for my planetary science work at *Researchgate* or at the digital archive at *archive.org* you might enjoy a few interesting reads.



For instance, I have used two Rubidium isotopes to estimate the age back to the precursor star to our sun (5.34 Billion years), and even estimated its mass of the precursor star at 13.8 Solar Masses.

I have found a mathematical algorithm to model exoplanetary systems around stars similar to our sun.

My most recent paper models the distance to the planet Mercury based on the collapse of the cloud that formed the planetary nebulae and turbulence. This paper derives its results using first principles.

I have more research I am working on ... stay tuned.

## **An Epilogue**

This afternoon I took a break in the middle of the day to get some exercise. I did some stretching and movement exercise in the pool of my new apartment.

This is the first summer in perhaps five years that I have taken a break from time to time to do some calisthenics. I use to go down to the ocean several times each summer to swim, or help some friends in their urban garden. But the last few years I have become so wrapped up in trying to get things done that I have let my general health slip.

In the spring when the COVID-19 pandemic began to grow here in Canada I realized that being in good health was an important survival strategy.

And it seems to have worked ... I suspect I survived a mild ‘bout of something’ about six to eight weeks ago. Since I did not get myself tested, I cannot confirm what it might have been: My arthritis acted up, my asthma worsened for a few days, my temperature was a bit above normal, and I was dead tired.

Since I was all but self-isolated, I did not put anyone else at risk. It was around this time that I decided to write this book. Why you may ask did I focus so much on fifty years ago and my bout with *Hong Kong Flu*?

It is something that my grandfather once said to me: “what does not kill you ... makes you stronger.”

I think I made it through a recent ‘bout of something’ because of my previous bout of *Hong Kong Flu* and because of all I have learned since then.

My advice to you is do not be scared.

Try as best you can to eat well, stay active and be in good health.

If you can, eat more fresh vegetables, high in the essential vitamins A, B and C.

Make sure you get plenty of exercise and a good night sleep.

Stick to a sensible routine.

And if you have plenty of free time, catch up on your reading, or do the things you have always wanted to do but never had enough free time to do.

Like the Queen said, we shall get through this!

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